

could not avail ourselves of the shipping space we had arranged. Following on that we were threatened by Bell & Co. with an action for damages amounting to £10,000, and we had to fix up as best we could. We decided to pay something like £6,000 to effect a settlement. The cancellation of the contract for the supply of sleepers to the Federal Government was due to no fault of our own. Following on that cancellation had to be the cancellation of the contract with McArdell & Bell. The proposal of Mr. Cullen to send the resolution to His Excellency the Governor for discussion in Executive Council is a novel one. Even if it were the proper course to adopt, His Excellency would not be likely to forget that there was another branch of the Legislature whose opinion would be worth having—a branch which has the power to bring about the dismissal of the Ministry if it thinks Ministers have done wrong. Mr. Cullen could scarcely expect the Government to act in an important matter like this on the suggestion of one House. Not that there is anything objectionable in the motion. I must confess that it is generous. It gives as free a hand to the Government as any Treasurer could wish; but the danger is that perhaps it goes too far, and that the custodians of the public purse in another place may not be so trusting as Mr. Cullen. Anyhow, they ought to be consulted. But the easiest way out of the difficulty is for this House, by an amendment of the motion, to signify its willingness to pass the Public Works Committee Bill, and I feel certain the Government will do the rest.

On motion by Hon. W. Kingsmill debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 5.59 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 7th October, 1915.

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The DEPUTY SPEAKER took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTION—PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS.

Mr. THOMSON (without notice) asked the Premier: What is the position as regards private members' business? About a fortnight ago the Minister for Mines moved that, in addition to Tuesdays and Thursdays, Government business should take precedence each alternate Wednesday. Yesterday being a holiday, I naturally assumed that private members' business would have been given preference to-day, but I find it is at the bottom of the Notice Paper. Can private members' business be dealt with on Wednesday next?

The PREMIER replied: Had yesterday been set aside for Government business, we would have lost a day on account of it being a holiday, and I am afraid private members will have to forego the day the same as the Government would have had to do.

Mr. THOMSON: Will Wednesday next be set apart for private members' business?

The PREMIER: That is governed by a Sessional Order.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Attorney General: 1, Education Department, "Lessons on the Laws of Health." 2, Report on alleged special

treatment at Kalgoorlie of prisoner George Hughes (asked for by Hon. Frank Wilson).

QUESTION — RAILWAY STEEL TYRES, CONTRACT WITH STRETLITZ BROS.

Mr. SMITH asked the Premier: In view of his reply to my last question *re* the Midvale Co., that this firm's tender was not accepted because their tyres had not been thoroughly tested, will he explain why they are specially mentioned as approved makers on Schedule No. 58a issued on the 22nd March last?

The PREMIER replied: The Midvale Steel Company are not mentioned as approved makers in connection with Schedule 58a of 22nd March last, as will be disclosed by reference to Specification 215, signed by the Chief Mechanical Engineer on 20th May, 1913.

Mr. Smith: I can produce a copy of it.

QUESTION—HORSE-RACING CONTROL, TO LEGISLATE.

Mr. HUDSON asked the Premier: 1, Is it the intention of the Government to have regard to the resolution of the House and introduce a measure giving effect to the recommendations contained in the interim report of the Joint Select Committee on horse-racing control? 2, If so, when?

The PREMIER replied: 1, It is not the intention of the Government to introduce a measure dealing with street betting this session unless the complete report of the committee in regard to control of racing is received in time to permit the whole question being submitted. 2, Answered by No. 1.

QUESTION — FLOUR SALES BY GOVERNMENT.

Mr. FOLEY asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, Is it true that the Government sold American flour to buyers in

South Australia at £17 10s. per ton when, at the same time, £18 10s. was being charged to buyers in this State for the same class of flour? 2, If so, will he see that local buyers get at least equal consideration with those in other States?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: 1, In order to avoid a large carry over of flour at the end of the season, and which in all probability would have to be sold at greatly reduced rates, the Government have consented to the millers who are gristing the wheat imported by the Government endeavouring to export the surplus stocks. 2, Flour is already being sold to local purchasers at less than the cost of production, and the selling rate is consistent with that ruling in the Eastern States.

QUESTION — LIQUOR LICENSE, SANDRINGHAM HOTEL.

Mr. ALLEN asked the Premier: Has he taken steps to deal with the license of the Sandringham hotel in view of the sworn evidence that persons were served with numerous drinks in the early hours of the morning?

The PREMIER replied: The matter is being investigated.

QUESTION — EDUCATION IN TEMPERANCE SUBJECTS IN STATE SCHOOLS.

Mr. GRIFFITHS asked the Minister for Education: 1, Is temperance taught in the schools? 2, To what extent is it taught, *i.e.*, what is the nature of the work being done in each section of the school? 3, Is this work reported on by the inspectors? 4, Could he supply the House with the reports of inspectors in the metropolitan area for the last 12 months?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied: 1, Yes. 2, It is taught in accordance with the Department's "Lessons on the Laws of Health," a copy of which I am tabling. 3, Yes. 4, Yes, if required.

QUESTION — FLYING MACHINE LOCALLY MANUFACTURED.

Mr. TAYLOR (for Mr. Green) asked the Premier: 1, Has his attention been drawn to a report in Tuesday morning's *West Australian* of an aerial flight from Coolgardie to Kurrawang by a young Kalgoorlie resident named A. E. Geere? 2, Is he aware that the whole of this machine, with the exception of the engine, was designed and made solely by young Kalgoorlie residents, many of whom are students of the Kalgoorlie School of Mines? 3, Will he draw the attention of the Federal military authorities, through the Prime Minister, to this successful flight, with a view of having the machine placed at the disposal of the military authorities?

The PREMIER replied: 1, Yes. 2, I believe so. 3, Yes.

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE, HORSE-RACING CONTROL.

Mr. HUDSON (Yilgarn) [4.38]: I move—

That the time for bringing up the report be extended for a week.

The report is under consideration by the committee, and we expect it will be ready by that date.

Question passed.

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE, MONEY BILLS PROCEDURE.

Mr. ROBINSON (Canning) [4.39]: I move—

That the time for bringing up the report be extended for a week.

The committee have met, and while they have not agreed on the terms of a Bill, the ideas have been in a way agreed upon, and representatives of each side are to see the Solicitor-General to try to frame clauses which will meet with common consent.

Question passed.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1915-16.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the 5th October, Mr. McDowall in the Chair.

Mines Department (Hon. P. Collier, Minister):

Vote—*Mines, £63,454:*

The MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. P. Collier—Boulder) [4.40]: I was under the impression that the work of this department was so well and favourably known to hon. members that there would be no need to occupy the time of the House with any introductory remarks.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Do not you want to tell us of your good deeds?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I am a modest man, and am content to allow them to be buried in obscurity. Those who are interested cannot fail to observe them. We have reason to congratulate ourselves on the fact that during the past year or two, in these times of stress, when the State has been suffering to a very great extent because of bad seasons and the war and other causes, the principal industry of the State has been progressing in a satisfactory manner. The gold production in 1914 for the whole of the State amounted to 1,232,977 fine ozs. of a value of £5,237,353, which, I think, considering the dislocation of everything consequent on the war, indicates that the industry is sound, and is being well maintained. For the first nine months of the present year, the value of the gold output was £3,855,514, and in the corresponding period of last year £3,900,841. So it will be seen that the falling off during the first nine months of this year, as compared with last year, is very small indeed. The total output of gold from Western Australia to date, which covers practically only the past two decades, amounts to 29,185,809 ozs., of a total value of £123,973,440. Only calm contemplation of the magnitude of those figures will bring home to hon. members the value the industry has been to the State during the past 20 years. The dividends paid by mining companies during 1914 amounted to £799,392, and for the first nine months of this year to £590,636, and the grand total of dividends paid is £25,292,705. During the past three or four years the Yilgarn goldfield has shown a substantial increase. There has been much activity in many of the out-

lying centres of that field, particularly at Westonia, where developments in the Edna May mine have been most encouraging. I think there is no reason to doubt that the Westonia field will continue to be a permanent and prosperous mining centre for many years to come. When we have regard to the fact that only three or four years ago that centre, which is now a hive of industry, consisted, comparatively speaking, of nothing but the native bush and timber, it brings home to us the remarkably rapid development which takes place in mining centres, and particularly so when there is a goldmine such as the Edna May; and I may say there are one or two others which are very promising also. Turning to another part of the Yilgarn field, it is a matter for congratulation that there has been a new discovery at Mount Holland, 100 miles from Southern Cross. As hon. members are aware, that find was made some few months ago, within the past six months; and there are at present, I believe, between 60 and 70 men employed at Mount Holland. A line of reef has been opened up for a length of four or five miles, and although the district may not come up to, shall I say, the boom reports first received with regard to it, there is no doubt whatever that history will repeat itself in this district, and that we shall see at Mount Holland as we have seen in many mining districts of this State, one or two fairly decent mines developed out of that new find. The country has been travelled over considerably during former years, and especially during the last year or two, but the district in which the find has been made was covered with thick, heavy scrub, and it was only by reason of a bush fire passing through that district last summer that the prospectors were able to get over the district and make this discovery.

Mr. Foley: Assisted prospectors have been there for twelve months.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: That is so. It is true, of course, that so far the values revealed at the new find are not very high; but we know that a good and successful mine does not depend altogether upon high values. Turn-

ing now to another goldfield, one of the earliest in the State, Yalgoo, we find that there has also been considerable activity during the past year or two. In the south Yalgoo district, at a distance of about 100 miles from the town of Yalgoo, a new field has been opened up known as Warriadar. Between 60 and 80 men are employed on that field at the present time, and the prospects are so good that one of the large mining companies of this State, I understand, who have an option over various leases in that district have practically decided to exercise the option and to put up a plant capable of mining in an extensive manner. As regards Meekatharra, it has become almost a stereotyped statement year after year on this occasion to say that the Meekatharra field continues to develop well. It is still the second field in importance in Western Australia. The mines are opening up and showing well as they go down. They are down about 700 or 800 feet at the present time, and there is no doubt that the future of the Meekatharra district and the permanency and value of the Meekatharra lodes as they go down are absolutely assured so far as we can be certain of anything in connection with mining operations. Then, too, there has been recently a development of considerable importance in some of the big Kalgoorlie mines. Turning to the outback North Coolgardie fields, we find that Leonora has maintained the prosperous condition which it has held for many many years past. The Sons of Gwalia mine continues to be the biggest producer and the mine of greatest importance in the back country lying north of Kalgoorlie. As indicating what is possible in some of our outback districts, I may state that only during the past two or three weeks the State battery in the Leonora district had a crushing of 78½ tons giving a yield of 380 ounces. Such crushings, small though they may be, but nevertheless fairly rich, are quite a common occurrence in many of the outback mining districts. Coming now to Lawlers, we have there also a condition of things which is matter for satisfaction. Some three years ago, or shortly after I took

office, I remember being on a visit to Lawlers. It was just after the big mines had closed down, and on that occasion the town presented an appearance of dejection which I have not seen equalled in any of the outback towns of this State. After operations in a large way had ceased and after those whom one may call the capitalists had practically abandoned the district, through the perseverance, faith, and energy of the local citizens and prospectors Lawlers is again coming into prominence. Some of the old mines which were considered worked out have been taken up and are being worked successfully by local syndicates and local prospecting parties; and there are in the district quite a number of small shows working in a very prosperous manner.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: Only one big company ever worked at Lawlers.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Even the mine that was abandoned by the big company and closed down is being worked to-day by a local syndicate, and so hopeful is the outlook that the local people have erected a 10-head or 20-head battery upon that old show which was supposed to have ended its days. Another district which was prosperous for many years is that of Laverton, and Laverton also has seen a revival during the past year or two. Fortunately there has been introduced into the Laverton district a considerable amount of capital from the Eastern States, with the result that there are working to-day in that district mines which have lain idle for years. We are fortunate also in having the Beria Consols, known at one time as the Lancefield mine, in full swing, employing 300 or 350 men directly. That mine taken with other mines in the district means that between 500 and 600 more men are employed in the Laverton district to-day than was the case two or three years ago. All this goes to indicate the possibilities of some of the old districts which have been rather depressed for many years, and it also goes to show that all that is needed to make these districts flourish once again is sufficient prospect-

ing and a little capital. Wiluna, which is the furthest out of the mining centres on the northern goldfields, has been somewhat quiet during the past year or two. It will be known to members who take an interest in the industry, that there has been metallurgical trouble in dealing with the ore in the Wiluna district. After all the privately owned plants had closed down, and had given up the problem as it were, the Mines Department decided to establish a plant of their own on a rather more extensive scale than they have done hitherto. We have just completed the erection at Wiluna of a slimes plant costing about £12,000, the biggest of its kind owned by the State. The first run of the battery has just been completed after two or three weeks' operations, with the result that 964 tons were treated for a recovery of £1,377. The plant was erected in the endeavour to solve the problem of the treatment of oxidised lode material in that district. There are hundreds of thousands of tons of the same ore in the Wiluna district, and I am very pleased to state that the responsible officers of the department report that the first run of the Wiluna battery indicates that our method of treatment will be a complete success. It is only those who know what Wiluna is and know the size and extent of those vast lodes and the difficulty that has attended their successful treatment for years past, who will be able to judge of the importance of the matter to that district. I believe there are in the Wiluna district ore bodies which would maintain almost as many men as there are in the Kalgoorlie district to-day, provided those ore bodies can be successfully treated. There are at Wiluna oxidised bodies 50 and 60 feet in width capable of being mined cheaply provided the difficulty of treatment is overcome. It is gratifying to know that those who have hung on to that outback centre under very many difficulties, more especially during recent years, appear now to have a prospect of a much greater measure of prosperity. There has also been, I am pleased to say, during the present year a greater amount of pros-

pecting than for many years past. This is due partly to the fact that we have had a bountiful season and that heavy rains have fallen throughout the goldfields. As a result the opportunities for prospecting have been greater than has been the case for many years past. From the records of the Mines Department I know there are many more individual prospecting parties out in the various fields of the State at the present time. At this point I may refer to the large prospecting party which left Southern Cross some few weeks ago. It consists of from 25 to 30 prospectors who have gone out into the country between Southern Cross and Ravensthorpe. The party are now camped at the new find, Mount Holland, which they intend making their base and from which they intend to operate in all the surrounding country. The Government have assisted that prospecting scheme to the extent of providing all the transport equipment. There are about 25 camels accompanying the party, who are also equipped with wagons. The Government have sent out with the party a geologist, whose advice and assistance will be very valuable to the prospectors, and also an assayer so that the party will be able to obtain indications as to the value of any discovery that may be made, without waiting to send into the nearest centre. I am hopeful that there will be at least one new field opened up as a result of the enterprise of these prospectors. In connection with that scheme, I desire to express my satisfaction at the fact that many of our own citizens, business people and others, became interested in prospecting during the last year or two. Quite a number of the prospectors with that party are being backed by Perth city men and others. It is gratifying to know the people in our own State realise the importance of prospecting to the State and to that extent are backing it with their own cash. Whilst that is so with some of our individual citizens, it is still a regrettable fact that the Chamber of Mines, as a body, and the owners of the big and wealthy mines in the State even now, as in years past, put nothing at all into prospecting.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: I doubt if they have ever spent £1,000 in prospecting.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I do not think they have in what I may call in the primary stages. Whilst we have paid something like 25 million pounds in dividends and whilst even now, year after year, there is paid by this State three-quarters of a million pounds in dividends, not one pound is put back into the State in order to replenish our mining resources. I think it is a great pity, looking back on past history, that Parliament did not take the matter in hand years ago and insist on a fair amount of the wealth won for the goldfields being put back into the industry in the State. Whilst that has been the attitude adopted by people in our own State, we find—

Hon. J. D. Connolly: That does not apply to the small mine-owners.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: A fair proportion of the wealth won in Western Australia is invested in Mexico, in America, and in other places, even, I was going to say, in Victoria. It is true some of the mine-owners have put a considerable sum of money into prospecting when they have taken options over leases. That is to say, that in some of the new fields they may take options over new leases and pay £2,000 or £3,000 on them in order to satisfy themselves that the option is worth taking up; they have spent considerable sums of money in individual cases, up to £10,000. That is, of course, a form of prospecting, it is testing the value of these mines, which we have no idea of from surface indications. That is a form of prospecting—and I desire to be fair—that the Chamber of Mines has spent a considerable sum of money on. Even allowing for that, I think it is a great pity that the owners of these mines have not set aside a proportion of their profits for what I may call the initiatory system of prospecting. More especially is that so when we find a difficulty now, not only in obtaining money to encourage prospecting, but in obtaining suitable men who are prepared to go out and give their time and take the risk of making new discoveries. I

am afraid it is too late at this stage to attempt to do anything by legislation. We have to content ourselves with expressing our regrets that the Chamber of Mines, and the owners of the large mines, have not realised to a greater extent their duty to this State. Because, after all, we have to remember that the shareholders in these dividend paying mines live almost exclusively in the old country. They are not Western Australian or even Australian citizens.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: A number live on the Continent.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: They live outside the continent of Australia and their interests in Western Australia or its welfare ceases when the mine they are interested in ceases to be a dividend paying proposition. It may be argued that these people, the investors at Home, have put a lot of money into mining in Western Australia. That may be so in years gone by, but it is not so in recent years. Money has not been obtainable in London for Western Australian mining for many years past.

Mr. Allen: Why?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I can easily guess the hon. member's "Why." There are many reasons. I wonder what are the hon. member's reasons?

Mr. Allen: They are a bit shy.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: They are, and I wonder why. They are shy of investing their money here because of the manner in which their money has been expended in years gone by, not because of the existence of legislation in the State, or unfair treatment, but it is due to many causes, some of which probably the hon. member knows very well. But for years past money has not been obtainable in London for Western Australian or Australian mining at all. Whilst that is so, it is gratifying to know that investors in the Eastern States have been getting more and more convinced of the opportunities there are for the profitable investment of money in Western Australia, and I do not think in the history of mining in this State has there ever been so much Eastern capital—

South Australian and Victorian capital—available for the industry in Western Australia as there has been during the last year or two. It is a pleasing feature that these Eastern citizens who have invested money in the mining industry have in many instances been successful. It is much better for the State that the dividends, say the Edna May, which has paid £100,000 in dividends in the short space of ten months, should have gone to Melbourne investors than to investors over the seas. The same thing applies to many other districts as well, particularly to those investors in Adelaide who for years past have been putting money into the mining industry. Coming to some of the work of the department for the year, the members of the geological staff have been employed throughout the whole of the year in completing an examination of the various districts. The fields examined include Yilgarn, Kalgoorlie, and Coolgardie, Meekatharra—the examination of which has been completed during the year—North Coolgardie, Kookynie, Niagara, Nullagine, and North of Peak Hill. In addition to that, Mr. Woodward, the Assistant Government Geologist has been investigating in the south-west division relative to the lime deposits of the State. During the year 12 geological bulletins have been issued, containing much detailed information as to the mineral resources of the State, and there has been noticed a growing demand for these publications. Fortunately, because of the assistance rendered by the Government, more particularly since the outbreak of the war, we have been able to maintain our output of base metals. The Ravenshorpe district has continued to operate as prior to the outbreak of the war, and even in such a very far north portion of the State as Yampi Sound there has been discovered and opened up a copper show during the year, and I am pleased to say that some English capital has been put into it, a comparatively small sum, only a few thousand pounds. This show is on the mainland in the very far northern portion of the State. It was discovered by one of the old pros-

pectors of the State, Mr. Menzies. It has been sold to a local syndicate who have succeeded in floating it in the old country. From the description I have received of the find, it is right on the ocean beach, practically open mining. It can be mined in the form of an open cut. The ore could be shot almost into the boats. From what I can learn from those who have visited the district, the value is fairly high, higher than the average for copper ores in this State.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: Would it take a ship 23½ feet draught?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: There is no harbour there, but the values are there, and no doubt if they get the values they will get the copper away all right.

Hon. Frank Wilson: What has become of the iron ore deposits?

Mr. Male: They are still up there.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I have not heard much about them.

Mr. Male: They cannot be got away.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: One of the difficulties of the development of that part of the State is that it is so far removed from, not only the outer world, but from the centres of Western Australia, and I believe a great proportion of our own citizens know little about it. From what I have been able to learn, there are immense possibilities for the development of mining for baser metals in the North-West portion of the State.

Mr. Male: The freight is still high at present.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: That is so. It can only be overcome by local smelting.

Mr. Male: Cannot the "Kangaroo" give a special freight?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: If they cannot make a do with it with the present local steamship freights, I do not think there will be much opportunity of assisting in that direction. The output of copper for the year amounted to 12,775 tons for a total value of £81,241. The copper production of the State to date totals 201,879 tons for a value of £1,254,298. Lead mining has been carried on fairly well during the year not-

withstanding the fact that, at the outbreak of the war the market for base metals was practically knocked out. There has been produced during the year 15,334 tons of lead for a value of £38,351 or a total production to date for the State of 61,820 tons for a value of £134,711. With regard to the production of tin, the total for the year was 331 tons for a value of £29,000 or a total production to date for the State of 14,298 tons for a value of £1,142,902. When we have regard to the fact that the market for tin, lead and copper practically collapsed at the outbreak of the war, it is very satisfactory to know that we have recovered and that for the greater portion of the year the operations have been going on just as if things were normal. The Baddera lead mine has closed down during the past month or two, having kept going since the outbreak of war under great difficulties, but from information I have received I have no doubt whatever that the Baddera mine and also the Narra Tarra mine at Northampton will resume operations at a very early date. The output of coal for 1914 was 319,210 tons for a value of £148,684, and for the first eight months of this year the coal output was 194,490 tons, valued at £93,000. The output of coal shows a falling off which, I think it will be agreed, was inevitable because a fair proportion of the output of Collie coal in recent years was a bunkering trade which has been very much affected by the outbreak of the war. The falling off has not been due to any decrease in the quantity taken by the Government railways, which is the largest and chief consumer of Collie coal in this State.

Mr. Thomson: You should use nothing else than Collie coal.

Mr. Bolton: What, and you a farmer!

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I imagine that the people whom the hon. member represents would make a great noise if the Government decided to use nothing else.

Mr. Thomson: Make locomotives to suit the coal.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: That is not so easy as some people imagine. I have no prejudice, nor have the Government any prejudice, against Collie coal. It would be stupid to say we have. We recognise the value of the industry; there is no industry of greater value to any State than the coal industry, because it is the foundation of all other manufacturing industries.

Mr. George: Why do not you use it on your steamers?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I am not dealing with the steamers. When Minister for Railways, I had Collie coal used to an extent which got me into great trouble in many directions.

Mr. Male: The P. & O. steamers use it.

Mr. George: Do not you think you ought to use it on your steamers instead of oil?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: We have heard so much about the steamers during the past year or two that members might let me get through the Mines Estimates without referring to them. For the information of the member for Kattanning, I would state that the farmers of this State would be likely to have a good deal to say if the Government decided to use all Collie coal for railway purposes, especially during harvest time, for that is a risk no Government would dare to take.

Mr. Heitmann: A farmer's representative on one occasion moved the adjournment of the House on that question.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes, it is all very well for men to meet in conference—men who know very little about the difficulties the Railway Department have experienced during the past 12 or 15 years with regard to coal supplies—and to carry general resolutions that this industry should be assisted. If they had some inside knowledge such as the departmental officers have they would take a different view.

Mr. Willmott: What about spark arresters?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It is all very well to talk about them. One of

the worries of my life when Minister for Railways, was that there was an inventor of a patent spark arrester on my door-step almost every morning. These men all claimed to have new patent spark arresters which would solve all the difficulties in regard to Collie coal. I endeavoured to turn them off to the chief mechanical engineer or the officers of the department who should judge such an invention, but they were just as persistent in endeavouring to persuade me as a layman who knew nothing about it to pronounce judgment upon their inventions.

Mr. George: The only efficient spark arrester stops the engine.

Mr. Willmott: That is not so. They are trying to keep the sparks in the ash-tray and cannot do it.

Mr. Thomson: During the strike, did not the railways use nothing else but Collie coal?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: There seems to be an impression in some quarters, from what I can gather in reading the newspapers, that some efficient means of arresting sparks has been devised but that the department are unwilling to adopt it. I can assure members that officers of the department who are responsible for testing the value of these inventions have no purpose in reporting adversely against them, and if an efficient spark arrester can be invented, I venture to say the Government of the day and the officers of the department will recognise it, and then the question of using Collie coal to a greater extent than it is used at present might be favourably considered.

Mr. Willmott: I will remind you of that in a few weeks' time.

Mr. Bolton: Any man with an efficient spark arrester need not stay in this country. They have been looking for them all over the world.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: My four years' experience of these patents and inventions have made me sceptical as to their value, but let us hope something will be discovered which will allow the use of Collie coal to a greater extent

than it can be used at present. It may be of interest to members to have some information in regard to the Government's operations of a trading concern which is not showing a loss.

Mr. Male: Name it.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I desire to briefly relate the history of the Phillips River copper field and more particularly the history during the past twelve months since the Government commenced smelting operations there.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: Is that a trading concern?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It is, more or less.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: There is no trading about that. It is developing mining.

Mr. Munsie: No; you do not develop a mine with smelters.

Mr. Thomson: What about State batteries?

Mr. Foley: If it is showing a profit, it cannot be a trading concern.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It is a trading concern which shows a very large indirect profit. Up to the end of 1914 the metal production at Phillips River was as follows:—Gold ore treated 76,329 tons; copper ore treated 77,838 tons, or a total of gold and copper ore treated of 154,168 tons. From that there was recovered 65,020ozs. of gold and 15,233ozs. of silver, and the total value of gold, silver and copper was £673,731. From the time the Government took over to the 31st August, 1915, the total tonnage of ore received at the smelting works has been 10,963 tons on which progress payments have been made on delivery at the works amounting to £26,405. This money has been advanced by the Government under a guarantee. The owners will be paid the total proceeds after the copper and gold produced have been sold, less the advance and interest thereon and the actual costs. The cost of getting the works into order for restarting was £3,432, and there has been expended on working account £38,896. The total tonnage smelted has been 9,821 tons, from which have been produced 533 tons of matte containing 257½ tons of

copper, 613ozs. of gold, and 1,866ozs. of silver, and 517 tons of blister copper containing 465 tons of fine copper, 5,305 ozs. of gold, and about 3,655ozs. of silver, being a total of 722½ tons of fine copper, 5,918ozs. of fine gold, and 5,521 ozs. of fine silver. Three shipments of matte and blister copper sent from Albany were valued at £68,300 for insurance purposes, but the actual proceeds of sale have not yet been realised. There are 123 tons of blister copper now at Albany and on the way to the Port Kembla works for refining treatment, worth something over £100 per ton. Since starting operations the Phillips River smelting works have paid in freights to the Railway Department £3,478 and to the State Steamship Service £4,012, and for water to the Water Supply Department £507, making a total to these three departments of £7,997. An average of 70 men are employed at the smelting works, not counting men getting firewood and flux and men employed in carting. The amount expended for firewood has been £3,386, for ironstone £2,183, and for limestone £322, being a total expenditure locally of £5,891. The expenditure for coke has been £14,656, most of which goes to New South Wales for purchase of the coke, and to the Melbourne Steamship Co. for bringing it to this State. With the exception of the coke account, practically the whole of the ore purchase expenditure, £26,405; repairs and renewals to works, £3,432; and working account, coke included, £38,896, or a total of £68,733, has been expended in the State. The operations of the smelter have enabled the Phillips River field to remain active since the outbreak of war, which it certainly could not have done but for the assistance of the Government. As against that assistance, although the returns are not yet to hand—we have not received the returns from the old country—there is no manner of doubt from the information which I do possess that the State will show a profit upon the operations. In addition to keeping the district going and keeping 70 men employed as we have done by advances to

the mine owners on the ore delivered to the smelter, and charging the cost of getting the smelter into working order, we shall, after recouping ourselves the whole of our outlay, be in a position to return a fair amount to our customers over and above the £26,000 of advances. We have been financing on a basis of copper at £56 10s. per ton, on which basis we have advanced to the extent of 90 per cent. Copper to-day stands somewhere between £70 and £75; it has been as high as £85 since the outbreak of war. Hon. members will realise that in taking our basis as £56 10s. per ton and advancing only 90 per cent, of that we are giving assistance on a very safe basis, and that the margin we have in hand will amply protect the State against any loss. If £70 per ton or thereabouts is realised, then after deducting all our expenses we shall be in a position to return a fair amount to the owners of the ore, apart from the advances already made.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: Are you still continuing those advances?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes.

Hon. Frank Wilson: You charge interest for the advances?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes. The cost of smelting, about £3 per ton, interest on the money, and also the cost of putting the smelter into working condition, will be deducted. I am spreading the last charge, which totals £3,000, over three years. Therefore, when the smelter has been in operation for three years, we shall have been repaid the money it cost to get the smelter started.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Is the smelter leased?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes.

Hon. Frank Wilson: What do you pay for it?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: A merely nominal rent. The smelter is leased from Mr. Neil McNeil, who was a big shareholder in the old Phillips River Co., and who purchased the smelter from that company. I thought that the information regarding Phillips River might be of interest to hon. members.

Hon. Frank Wilson: We will get a balance sheet of it some day, I suppose?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes, I shall be pleased to issue a balance sheet because there is no risk in this. I took very good care that the State was not going to lose anything.

Hon. Frank Wilson: We shall have to put you in charge of the State steamers.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It might be a good move: Fortunately, for every pound we advanced we had the value in ore at the smelter first. Therefore, the State was able to assist the district, practically without taking any risk. The only possible risk would arise in the event of copper falling below £56 10s. per ton, which it has not done for many years.

Mr. Gilchrist: Are you extending that system of advancing on copper to other districts?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes, but to a very small extent, because we have not had the requests for assistance. Small quantities of copper have been produced out beyond Meekatharra, and on this advances have been made. I am adopting the same principle of advances for copper in any part of the State, and also with regard to lead wherever it is necessary. I made the same offer with regard to tin, but, fortunately, the tin market recovered soon after the outbreak of war, and it was not necessary for the tin miners to take advantage of the offer.

Mr. Gilchrist: Did not you stop giving advances in the Roebourne district?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No.

Mr. Gilchrist: Did you stop it through your representative?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No. I do not know whether the hon. member refers to the Whim Creek mines.

Mr. Gilchrist: No. I refer to Roebourne.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: As a matter of fact, I made an offer to the late manager of the Whim Creek copper mines to assist him in the same manner as I have assisted the Ravensthorpe people, provided there was any possibility of getting the Whim Creek mines re-started. As hon. members know, the Whim Creek mines closed down before the war, and Mr. Stevens thought that

with Government assistance he might be able to reorganise the company and get going again. I assured him he would receive assistance on the same basis.

Mr. Gilchrist: I was referring more to copper shows immediately around Roebourne.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: As a matter of fact, I went a little further in that district. I sent a Government sampler up there and established a sampling floor so that the miners had only to cart their ore in, whereupon it was sampled by the Government sampler, and the Government were then prepared to advance on the assay value. This, of course, was some two years ago. Unfortunately, however, there was very little ore forthcoming, and I had to withdraw the sampler because it did not pay us to keep him there. Nothing like the quantity of ore anticipated was forthcoming. The prospectors did not seem to get going, and so the sampler was removed.

Mr. Gilchrist: Do you think he was there long enough to give the thing a fair trial—only about four months?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The sampler was there for a considerable time. Had there been any indications of activity, I would not have withdrawn him. As a matter of fact, however, the quantity of ore fell off after he went there, instead of increasing as one would naturally have expected. I offered the same assistance to the lead mines, but, unfortunately, those mines also did not develop to the extent expected by their proprietors. Throughout the whole State with regard to the base metals, copper, lead and tin, I have been prepared since the outbreak of war to assist in the manner which I have indicated. I think I am justified in saying that this has had a very helpful influence upon the State, and more especially, of course, on the districts concerned.

Mr. Foley: Those conditions would apply to the Whim Creek copper mines to-morrow if they re-started?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: They would apply anywhere, and would apply equally to copper, lead, or tin. There is

only one other phase of the industry to which I wish to refer, and that is the men employed in it. The number has been well maintained during the past year, a total of 12,786 men. Of those, 5,594 were employed above ground, and 7,192 underground.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Is that for mining right throughout the State?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes.

Hon. Frank Wilson: It has gone back a good deal.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It has gone back from what it was in the years gone by, in the prosperous days, when I think the total was between 16,000 and 17,000. But that is many years ago, and included in that figure, we must remember, were nearly 2,000 alluvial diggers. Alluvial mining has practically dwindled out of existence, there being only 100 or 200 men engaged in it now. Of course, with the decline of the gold yield—and we must bear in mind that it has been steadily declining since 1902—the number of men employed has diminished as well. Still, the number is satisfactory and has been fairly well maintained of recent years. The men engaged in the mining industry have paid a fairly heavy toll, both as regards accidents and as regards what is known as miner's complaint. Taking only the last 2½ years, we find that there were for 1913 and 1914 and for the eight months of 1915 72 fatal accidents and 2,166 serious accidents. It is just as well for us to place that on the other end of the scale when we are estimating the value of the mining industry to the State. The toll of life is not entirely disclosed by those figures, which do not take into account the fairly large and ever increasing number of men who find their way into the Government sanatorium year by year. The dust evil in the mines, and particularly in the deeper mines, has of late years become very serious, and with the object of at least minimising it I have during the present year, by regulation, insisted upon the installation of a system of pipes and water sprays underground and in other working places. It is complete in many of our mines

while in the others it is being installed. As the result of that installation I confidently look forward to a considerable diminution in the number of men affected by the dust evil; because, after all, it is not the atmosphere in which the men work which is responsible for the trouble, it is almost entirely due to the fine dust getting into their lungs, which sets up miners' complaint. I think I am safe in saying that so far as it is possible to eliminate dust—of course it never will be entirely eliminated in our dry mines and on our dry crushing plants—but so far as it is possible to minimise the evil, it is being done. The problem of dealing with dust in the mines of Western Australia is greater than in any other country in the world where mining operations are being carried on, because the plants on our mines are of the dry crushing type. The ore is treated dry, and so it cannot be made thoroughly wet underground, for it would hang up the mills and stop the process. In Africa and other places where mining is carried on on a large scale, they have wet crushing plants, so there is no reason why large quantities of water cannot be poured on the ore underground. That is exactly what cannot be done here. We have to be very careful to adjust the quantity of water which will just suffice to allay the dust and not be sufficient to interfere with the dry crushing mills: that is a problem which the mine managers and the inspectors have to face at present. I am pleased to say that by co-operation of the men and the managers in the judicious use of the water used on the ore, in the working places, we shall be able almost entirely to suppress the dust, without in any way interfering with the dry crushing operations of the mine. If we succeed in doing that, it will be of the utmost importance to the men concerned, for we shall have accomplished something which will tend to lessen what I might call the appalling death roll that has obtained for many years among men who, in the prime of life, have been struck down with miners' complaint. That is a work to which the officers of the department are devoting a good deal of time and thought and

study, and I believe we are on a fair road to making a material improvement in that direction. The work of the batteries, which is a very important feature in the operations of the department, I have not referred to, for the reason that the batteries' branch is not included in the estimates of the Mines Department this year. Members will notice that they have been placed amongst the trading concerns, which are near the end of the Estimates. When we reach the vote for the batteries I will take an opportunity of dealing with the work of the branch during the year. We have reason to congratulate ourselves on the fact that the future of the State's greatest industry, its permanency, is assured, and that the production of gold and minerals in this State will play a leading—if not the leading—part in the prosperity and welfare of the State.

Hon. FRANK WILSON (Sussex) [5.50]: I have listened with very much interest to the statement made by the Minister for Mines. I certainly must congratulate him on his modesty. He has put a plain, straightforward account of the work of the department before the Committee, and he has not sounded his personal trumpet too loudly. Indeed I agree that he is usually fairly modest in his announcements to the House. To that extent he furnishes a refreshing contrast to certain other Ministers. I am glad to hear from him that we can feel some assurance that this great industry, which has practically made Western Australia, has a degree of permanency which it did not appear to have a year or two ago. From what the Minister tells us, it appears we have come down to normal almost. I cannot help expressing my belief that there is still more gold to be found in Western Australia than has been discovered during recent years. One cannot look at the vast extent of our auriferous country without realising that if we could only get the people, and the necessary capital, to properly test and develop the different shows discovered, we might do very much more than has been done in the past. The Minister referred to investors as being shy of investing capital in Western Australia, or indeed in

Australia generally. I fancy that has been more or less the experience of every mining country. We have first the prospecting and the find; then comes the gambling and the speculation. That goes on for several years. Then it gradually begins to sink back, and investors go looking for fresh fields in other places. I do not know that Western Australia has been different from other countries in this respect, but I do think that with a strong effort this shyness might be overcome. We have to remember that every action of the Legislature is looked upon askance, and every time we introduce legislation which, in the opinion of those interested in mining, will throw obstacles in the way of cheap working, they magnify the trouble and decide that it is a good country to keep out of. So, whilst I agree fully with the Minister's concluding remarks as to the unfortunate accidents and loss of life in this industry, whilst I agree that every step that can be taken should be taken to avoid those accidents, I say we require to be very careful how we put unnecessary obstacles in the way of the working of the industry. Mining speculators and those who invest money are not philanthropists any more than any others who invest in our lands or our forests or other industries. They are out to get the very best returns they can for their investment, and they look for larger returns from mining, because it is more uncertain and a greater gamble, and in it they are apt to make bigger losses. One cannot help remembering the many millions invested in this industry and lost. Where we get one good mine occasionally, such as we have a fair number of in Western Australia, we get a score or 50 or 100 ventures that are disastrous to those who put their money into them.

Mr. Foley: A lot of the money which came here in the early days for mining investment never reached the fields at all.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: And a vast amount never came to Western Australia at all. Many thousands were spent in London.

The Minister for Mines: And a great deal of the capital which came here was not spent to the best advantage.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: That also is true. Many good propositions were utterly ruined by bad management.

The Minister for Mines: If we had that money to-day we would discover some mines.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Yes, if we had our time over again and could control the capital we would have a very different result from what we have had during the past 20 years. Yet, I am afraid, if we had our time over again the new generation would refuse to learn from the experience of the previous generation. They would go in again for the same old gamble, just as has occurred in all other mining countries. An investor is always out for profit, I do not care whether he is in the Eastern States or the Old Country or Europe. Investors do not come to Western Australia from love of the place, but come because they hope here to make a good profit, because they think they can see a chance of a big return. I am sorry to disagree with the Minister, but I do not think our friends in the Eastern States are any better than those at Home.

The Minister for Mines: I do not think that they are, but it is a good thing to get the money invested.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Of course, whether it is from the Eastern States or Britain we want all the capital we can get. The Minister made some reference to the far northern portion of the State. I interjected as to whether he knew anything about the iron ore deposits up there. I believe they are very rich and very extensive, and can be cheaply worked. Something was done there some years ago, but not much. There was a little prospecting near Yampi Sound, and I am sorry to know that all that has been closed down. It seems to me that the far northern portion of our State should give very big results. I have always been surprised that we do not hear anything of the original Kimberley goldfields. They seem to have gone clean out of existence. It would be interesting to know whether anybody is working up there these days. There were a few Chinese

alluvial fossickers at one time, but perhaps they have got out also. It appeals to the imagination, seeing that gold was discovered there 30 years ago—that was the first big rush in Western Australia—that there might be great prospects of other discoveries in that part of the State, and I look forward to the time when some important find will be made in that quarter, for I am strong in the belief that we have not yet, by a long way, unearthed all the mineral wealth we possess.

The Minister for Mines: There is every mineral in the north-west.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: That is just what amazes me; we are not able to get these minerals in payable quantities.

Mr. Foley: Wait till the freezing works are going. They will all be Britishers up there and some of them will find the minerals.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I hope they do. I was glad to hear the reference made to the coal industry in which I have been for a considerable time more or less personally interested. When I was a Minister of the Crown I ceased my connection with the industry entirely, but when I was put out of office four years ago I once more took a deep interest in it and at the present time I am pretty heavily involved personally.

Mr. O'Loughlen: I hope you will come out all right.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I am going to have a hard struggle to do so. I am glad that the Minister for Mines realises that in the Collie coal field we have a splendid asset. I am sorry that he seems to resent the action taken the other day by the commercial bodies who are now seeking to wait upon him by way of a deputation. I want to encourage every section of the community, more especially the Chamber of Commerce and the Chamber of Manufactures.

Mr. O'Loughlen: And the Trades Hall?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Yes, and the Trades Hall. I want all those bodies to take a lively interest in our primary industries, and in fact all the industries. It is their business to do so and to bring influence to bear in order that we may

conserve all our own trade, the trade which is here for us. Why should we be importing large quantities of New South Wales coal into Western Australia when we have our own? We ought to use every ounce of Collie coal that we can.

Mr. Harrison: Not where it is likely to be destructive.

Mr. O'Loughlen: The leader of the Country party states that the fire difficulty has been overcome.

Mr. Willmott: But they will not believe me.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I believe the difficulty has been overcome, but that does not say that we shall not have fires even if we do not use Collie coal. I have seen fires started with Newcastle coal, and even without any coal at all.

Mr. Harrison: I saw one train start four fires within twenty miles.

The Minister for Mines: What coal was being used?

Mr. Harrison: I expect it was Collie coal.

The Minister for Mines: Of course you put it down to Collie coal.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Newcastle coal also starts many fires.

The Minister for Mines: It is a bad feature that if a fire occurs near the railway line it is attributed to Collie coal.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Give a dog a bad name and you might as well shoot him at once.

Mr. Harrison: Can you state that Collie coal is not worse than Newcastle coal?

Mr. O'Loughlen: It may be worse, but do not let us make it worse still.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The Collie coal will not last as long as Newcastle coal. It is lighter in character. It will carry further, but I doubt very much whether it is responsible for more fires than Newcastle coal. The department will gladly avail themselves of Collie coal and use nothing else. We have had experience of it before in the case of the strike in New South Wales, and I did not hear that there were more fires while it was being used exclusively. That

goes to prove the great advantage the industry has been to the State.

The Minister for Mines: It reduced the price of Newcastle coal, too.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Yes, and to-day we would be paying 35s. a ton for Newcastle coal if it were not for the fact that we have our own mines.

Mr. Foley: If you could get all the members on your side of the House to agree to passing a motion favouring the Government's use of Collie coal exclusively from now until March next, we might try it.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I am not prepared to ask them that, but I would like to ask all hon. members to favour the use of Collie coal exclusively for ever. When Dr. Jack, as a Royal Commission, investigated the Collie coal industry here 10 or 12 years ago, he laid down that the commercial value of Collie coal was 9s. a ton at the pit's mouth when Newcastle coal was 15s. 4d. a ton. To-day the department are only paying 10s. 6d. a ton, and for Newcastle coal 24s. 6d. and up to 27s. 6d. Therefore, there must be an enormous saving to the railway department.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Our local consumers could be more patriotic.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I admit that.

Mr. O'Loughlen: The companies do not push the domestic trade as much as they might do.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: If the hon. member will give us his ideas in regard to the domestic trade I promise him that I will push it along. We cannot make people consume fifty tons of coal if they only want one ton. It is unjust for everyone to be pessimistic about this industry. The coal is a good fuel, there is no question about that, and the fact that large quantities are used on the railways is proof enough that it is a valuable fuel and that it has saved the State a considerable sum of money in different ways. The Trans-Australian railway is just now beginning to use a large quantity of coal, and we find it is being brought from New South Wales, put into trucks at Fremantle and hauled to Kalgoorlie.

Mr. Munsie: The reason they give is, that Collie coal will not stack.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: That has been disproved. It will not keep as well as the other coals, but then again New South Wales coal will not keep as well as the coal from South Wales. It is only a question of degree.

Mr. O'Loughlen: We want to show confidence in it ourselves first.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: We are using eighty per cent. of Collie coal on the railways; that is a very fair proportion, but we could do with the additional twenty per cent. very well.

Mr. Foley: It would be a very good thing for the State if we could use all Collie coal.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Therefore we should not deprecate the action of any public body which might come forward to assist the industry generally. At the present time there is a bigger equipment in the Collie coalfields than is required. The companies there could cope with five or ten times the present trade. I will guarantee that the money spent in the mine in which I am interested could with little notice turn out the whole of the requirements of the State, the mine has been so well developed and so thoroughly equipped. Nothing has been spared in the way of expenditure to gain that end.

The Minister for Mines: The trouble is that there are too many companies and too much equipment for the output.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Look at my little company. We have done all this in order to be in a position to tackle the bunkering trade at short notice. Unfortunately, the war has interfered with what we hoped would develop into something big, and now we are practically dependent upon the Government.

The Minister for Mines: The companies have been developing the bunkering trade in the last three or four years.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: There are difficulties to overcome. There has to be carried a larger quantity of our coal than is the case with the imported stuff and that is a bar. However, the fact remains

that the industry is well worthy of every assistance which the Government, and the Parliament, and the people of the State can give it. The industry employs a large number of men who receive the highest wages paid to coal miners in any part of the world, or at any rate that would be the case if they had constant employment.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Unless the agricultural embargo is removed they will have a bad time in the summer.

Mr. Bolton: This would be a dangerous year in which to remove it.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Is the embargo any different this summer from what it has been in the past?

Mr. O'Loughlen: No, but you have lost the bunkering and the other trades.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I know that. Still, I hope we will be able to pull through and that we may be relieved of some portion of that embargo in parts of the State if not in all. I am pleased indeed to hear what the Minister had to say about the Ravensthorpe district. That centre has had a varied career. In my time, between £30,000 and £50,000 was spent in constructing the railway and providing harbour accommodation, and after it has been idle for so long it is gratifying to find that the smelting works there are keeping the centre going and that it promises to be an important district. I am glad to hear that the operations of the Government are on such sound lines. I shall be glad to have the balance sheet of the operations of the smelting works and to find that there is a fair margin of profit as the result of the efforts of the Government. Taking the position all through, it is satisfactory to find that we are not going backward in the mining industry but that we are holding our own, and that the number of people employed in the industry in the last two years has been slightly on the increase.

The Attorney General: It is a great thing in these times.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Before tea I was remarking how beneficial it is for Western Australia during these trying times to have an industry like gold mining, one which does not suffer to anything like the same extent as other industries do from war, drought, and the other evils which have made themselves felt during the past 12 months. Gold mining has been a great standby indeed, and I hope that it may long continue to be a standby, and that it may even largely increase. The departmental figures show that there is not much economy to congratulate the Minister upon. I notice there is a general increase, though only a small one, of some £2,300. During the present hard times we look to each Minister for the exercise of the strictest economy, in accordance with the Treasurer's statement, made when delivering the Budget, that economy was to be the keynote of the financial administration of this State. However, economy is not much in evidence so far as the Mines Department is concerned; and I hope that when we get to the items we shall be able to assist the Minister by making some reductions. After all said and done, we want to see reduced expenditure, not increased expenditure. No matter how much we may appreciate the Minister's efforts at economy in the administration of the department, we can call upon him to cut his figures down to the last possible pound. I do not intend to touch on items now. There will be an opportunity of doing that later. But I should like to ask the Minister, if he replies, to give us some idea of the meaning of the item "Less rebate, £400," at the end of the vote. One wonders what this rebate means. I trust we shall be able to reduce as we go through the various items.

Mr. THOMSON (Katanning) [7.36]: I intend to be very brief. I think we are all pleased that the Minister had such a splendid account to give of the mining industry. Everyone recognises that gold mining has done a great deal for Western Australia. It started this State on the upgrade, and has been a great factor in keeping Western Australia on the up-

grade ever since; and I sincerely trust that another Golden Mile will be discovered very soon. In referring to the Ravensthorpe smelter the Minister seemed to be thoroughly pleased at being able to say that one, at least, of the State trading concerns was showing a profit. I congratulate him on the fact, and I am glad that the confidence of the Government—and this applies not only to the present Ministry but also to their predecessors—in Ravensthorpe has been justified. The Ravensthorpe district has great possibilities, and I am sure it must be gratifying to the whole of the State that that little corner of Western Australia has been doing so well. I wish to touch more particularly on the Collie coal question. I am a great believer in the policy of supporting natural local industries, and I consider the Government should foster the Collie coal industry to a greater extent than they do. There has been a great deal of prejudice against Collie coal. Every fire that occurs along the railways is laid to the blame of Collie coal. During the New South Wales coal strike our whole railway system was run with Collie coal, and I am assured by the Collie people that during the year I refer to there were fewer fires than in any other year. To my mind it is a fair proposition that Collie coal should have a trial during one entire season, in order that we may ascertain whether it is entitled to all the blame it has received. Collie coal should be used more largely, not only by the Government, but also by private individuals. From the report of the Commissioner of Railways for 1913-14 it appears that the department used £94,254 worth of imported coal as against £90,680 worth of our local coal. Now, money kept in the State is an advantage. It gives employment, and it helps to pay our rates and taxes. For the £94,254 sent to New South Wales I will admit that we may have got good value in the form of coal. The matter is, of course, one for experts to decide. Generally speaking, however, I consider that if that amount of money had been kept in the State it would have been an ad-

vantage. The Railway Department would then have had £184,934 to spend on local coal. Now I wish to draw attention to a remarkable set of figures. According to the reports of the Commissioner of Railways, the cost of imported coal in 1907-8 was 17s. 9d. per ton, whilst in 1913-14 the average cost was 23s. 10d., an increase of 6s. 1d. per ton. For 1907-8 Collie coal averaged 9s. 3d. per ton, and in 1913-14 10s. 9¼d., an increase of 1s. 6¼d. In the case of imported coal we have given an increase of 6s. 1d. per ton, whilst in the case of Collie coal we have given an increase of only 1s. 6¼d. It appears to me that that is not a desirable state of affairs. In my opinion the increase, if any, should be the other way; and I hope the day is not far distant when we shall use Collie coal to the utmost, when nothing but Collie coal will be used on our railways.

Mr. Bolton: There is not much difference between the two increases in percentage.

Mr. THOMSON: It means that for one ton of imported coal we have to use about 1¼ tons of local coal.

Mr. Bolton: But there is not much difference in the percentage increases.

Mr. THOMSON: I think there is. I wish to suggest to the Government the advisability of extending the railway line from Cardiff to junction with Mumballup on the Donnybrook line. I make the suggestion because I wish to see a bunkering trade in Collie coal established at Albany. By the construction of the eight miles of railway that I suggest, the port of Albany will be brought about 58 miles nearer to the coal fields, and the expense would not be great. There would also be a considerable benefit to the residents on the Katanning-Kojonup railway, and perhaps it would lead to that railway becoming a payable proposition. When the iniquitous terminal charge of 1s. per ton might be abolished. As I have said, I trust the day is not far distant when nothing but Collie coal will be used throughout our Government departments, and when all private individuals in this State will be patriotic enough to use only Collie coal.

Mr. HARRISON (Avon) [7.44]: I was glad to hear the statement of the Minister for Mines. In looking through the Estimates, however, I cannot see an item referring to that brilliant spot in Western Australian gold mining, Westonia. At Westonia there is a group of mines on which mining interest is mainly focussed at present. In respect of that group there is more activity than in respect of any other, both in the local market and in the Melbourne market. Moreover, there are at Westonia mines in the developmental stage, and prospecting ought to be encouraged throughout that district. It is necessary that there should be a registrar located there. I have heard complaints about the waste of time in having to travel backwards and forwards to the registrar's office at Southern Cross. It requires two days to do the trip and then there is considerable time occupied in attending to matters there. Why could not the warden make a call at Westonia at intervals? There are sufficient interests there to warrant that being done. This would only involve a small expenditure and a great saving of time and money would result to the people interested in Westonia. A good deal has been said about the Collie coal industry. I am not altogether convinced that the use of Collie coal is dangerous during dry seasons, but if it can be proved that it is not more dangerous than Newcastle coal, then we might with advantage use it. We know that it is not possible to raise steam as quickly with Collie as with Newcastle coal, or with a mixture of both. The question of economy comes in if it is not possible to raise the same amount of energy. At the same time we want to do what we can to develop the local industry. I am not against the use of Collie coal, but at the same time we do not want to run extra risk. If it can be proved that Collie coal can be used and that we can get all the steaming power we want out of it, then by all means it should be used. There is such a thing as false economy and I wish to sound a note of warning in that direction.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN (Forrest) [7.50]: I did not intend to say anything on the

mining Estimates but as the discussion has been carried on by members who are not specially interested in this industry, I thought it my duty in the absence of the member for Collie (Mr. A. A. Wilson) to thank those members representing the agricultural districts for their attitude towards the coal industry and for having given their benediction to the extended use of Collie coal. The fostering of this industry has been the subject of many debates in this House, but I venture to say that we have never heard any greater measure of approval of its use than we have heard to-night, particularly from the leader of the Opposition and the member for Katanning. Figures have been quoted in favour of the use of Collie coal and it has been demonstrated by actual tests that during the time the railways of Western Australia were held up for their supplies owing to the strike in New South Wales, Collie coal was used exclusively on our railways and it has been pointed out by the member for Katanning that if in times of national necessity, such as that, we could use the local product exclusively, it is a powerful argument in favour of the permanent use of that coal.

Mr. George: You can take a risk in an emergency.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The people are prepared to give credit to the Government for the magnificent efforts they have made to get the industry going. The people realise that the present Government have done more than has ever been done by any other Government towards helping the industry.

Mr. Thomas: Then why all these tears?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: They will be tears of joy if the Government take 100 per cent. instead of 80 per cent. of Collie coal as at present.

Mr. George: Tell them it is the best coal.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: If Collie coal had the calorific value of other coals there would be no need for deputations.

Mr. Bolton: They did a lot of harm to the industry by bunkering a lot of inferior coal.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: At the time the bunkering trade was being established we found that the practice adopted by the coal companies of supplying inferior stuff did a lot of damage to the industry. They have learned a lesson in the school of experience which they are not likely to repeat in future. At the same time it had such a detrimental effect that it put the industry back considerably. The coal proprietors supplied inferior stuff to the vessels, and I suppose to the railways as well, although the railway inspectors are wide awake as a rule. The demand was so keen that the coal companies thought they were justified in supplying inferior stuff to make up the quantity.

Mr. George: They fetched the roof down.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The member for Collie exposed that business in this House, and he was foremost in denouncing the companies for the methods they adopted and which did not reflect credit on them. However, that is past and gone, and I do not think they are likely to indulge in a repetition of such a nefarious practice. Unfortunately even to-day there is lack of cohesion amongst the coal proprietors and they do not seem to work together for the advancement of the industry. If they were united at the present time there are certainly many points they could pick up with advantage to the industry. The leader of the Opposition has pointed out that there is equipment on one mine at Collie sufficient to supply all the wants of the State, and that the supply of coal is unlimited, but what this House is urging, and what I hope the Government will do, is that an effort shall be made to increase the consumption. There is a good deal of comment as to the Government not utilising coal on some of their State steamers, the reason I believe being the structure of some of those vessels.

Mr. George: They will not be able to use coal on the "Kangaroo."

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I realise that, and I am not going to say that modern ideas should not be adopted even for the sake of a local industry. I think if in co-operation with the Railway Department

the coal companies were to establish a local dépôt to foster the use of Collie coal for domestic purposes, much good would be achieved. There is a good deal of prejudice existing to-day against the use of Collie coal and it is not altogether confined to the locomotive drivers.

The Premier: It is the best household coal in Australia.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: There is a tribute by the leading public man in the State, yet we find that the firewood and coal companies dealing in this commodity in the metropolitan area are charging £3 12s. a ton for the imported article and £2 8s. for Collie coal. That may seem a fair advantage to Collie coal, but when we consider that that coal only costs 11s. at the pit's mouth, and that it is retailed in the metropolitan area for 48s. a ton, there must be a screw loose somewhere.

The Premier: You can get it for 25s. in Perth.

Mr. Harrison: Get the distribution into better hands.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I have raised the question of the distribution and the Premier has pointed out that it is not a matter for the Railway Department, it is a matter for the companies to take up. I believe that if the companies were to come together it might be possible to bring about the establishment of a dépôt in the metropolitan area where the coal could be retailed at a price which would give them a fair profit after allowing for freight, cost of handling and distribution. If it is turned out at 11s. a ton it does not require much calculation to show that it is possible to dispose of it in the City at much less than 48s.

Mr. Thomas: What is the freight?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: About 7s. a ton. The coal companies are not deriving much profit from the coal at the present time and the miners at Collie are only averaging three days' work a week. They are urging Parliament to see if it is not possible to remove this embargo in the summer months, which is based on the prejudiced statement that the use of Collie coal on the railways is detrimental to our agricultural industry.

Mr. George: It is detrimental if it sets the crops on fire.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: That is a parrot cry. Possibly in years gone by Collie coal, on one or two occasions, has been responsible for some trifling damage.

The Premier: Is it a fact that along railway lines where no Collie coal is used, fire breaks have to be established?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: It is so, and the member for Murray-Wellington (Mr. George) as an ex-Commissioner of Railways must know it. To overcome the difficulty it has been suggested that a short Bill might be put through Parliament enabling the Commissioner of Railways to encroach on a narrow strip of the farmers' land adjoining the railways for the purpose of widening the firebreak which the fettlers now make along the railway fences. The present break is of one chain width, and it has been suggested that should be extended to three chains, so as to obviate all risk of fire. Another method is the use of the spark arrester. We have had numerous tests of spark arresters, and the leader of the Country party has now discovered an effective one. I believe he speaks for the farmers; I believe if he advocated any proposition a large number of the farmers would follow him, because they are of the following variety. We want to try to win the support of the farmers on this question of vital importance to the Collie district.

Mr. Wansbrough: You will never do it.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: That is pessimistic. It should be the desire of even the farmers to assist, and not condemn, a local industry.

Mr. Wansbrough: The farmers of Beverley have been burnt out too often.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I cannot believe it. Unfortunately I am not able to combat the statement, because the Royal Commission inquiring into the use of Collie coal are now in recess. They have not yet concluded their labours. They are gathering evidence as to the alleged detrimental effect of the use of Collie coal as compared with that of the imported article, but owing to the war they are at present in recess.

Mr. George: Perhaps owing to their consciences.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Their consciences are of quite a different type from that of the hon. member. He is evidently of opinion that because a man has a seat on a Royal Commission, he is there for his own personal ends. The member for Collie (Mr. A. A. Wilson) has fought strenuously for an increased consumption of Collie coal. He is a member of that Royal Commission, and I make no doubt that on conclusion of the taking of evidence before that Commission he will be able to give the House some valuable information. Quite recently the Federal Government have been using Collie coal on their transports. They have taken fairly big shipments during the last few weeks, and we trust that the demand will grow. But a circumstance that has hit Collie very heavily is that owing to the war the tramp steamers are no longer calling here, and for the time being the bunkering trade is practically settled. On top of that this summer embargo, which will be applied in a few weeks' time, against the use of Collie coal on railways in agricultural districts, will mean a serious hardship for Collie. Collie coal came to the rescue of the State at a time when the State badly needed assistance. It is quite probable that Collie coal will again help the State out of difficulties should occasion arise, and if only in consideration of this the local industry should be fostered to the greatest possible extent. The member for Avon (Mr. Harrison) pointed out that Collie coal has not the same steaming qualities as the imported coal. Perhaps it has not, but, if one may judge by the pace that some of our trains get up, many of them restricted to 15 miles an hour, I do not think Collie coal would be likely to have the effect of making them any slower than they are. The pace of some of the trains I have to travel by is too awful to speak of. The people of Collie desire the assistance of Parliament in the fostering of the coal trade. We require to educate the general community to the use of our local industry. If Western Australia is ever to be a manufacturing State it will

take years to build up those manufacturing, because we have been seriously handicapped by Federation. When first the Interstate barriers were broken down the old-established industries of the other States were able to pour their products into Western Australia, and, as I say, it will take us years to establish our own industries.

The Premier: The coal owners of Collie have never neglected an opportunity of fleecing the general community in the interests of private companies.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I will admit they have tried to fleece the Commissioner of Railways and the present Premier. Although they did not succeed, they tried to drive a hard bargain. It is only human nature.

Mr. George: Collie nature.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Human nature; and the hon. member is no different in this respect from others. If he thought he could score a point on another in a deal he would score it every time. None of us is a philanthropist. If Western Australia is going to feel its feet as a manufacturing State, Collie supplies an ideal opportunity for establishing industries. There are there millions of tons of coal, water in abundance, and the place is fairly close to a good port. With all the natural advantageous conditions which Collie possesses, the more help the Government can give to assist the local industry, to encourage the people to use the local commodity the better it will be for the State. Collie coal is not a Collie question, it is a State question. There are difficulties in the way of building up the trade, but Parliament can overcome them. The Government are now taking 80 per cent. of Collie coal for the railway locomotives, and I want the Government to risk the opposition that may come from one or two farming centres, at any rate to risk it till the deputation arrives—

The Premier: To risk a claim for damages.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: You have risked such claims in the past. I have one or two friends who have been ruined by fire,

but who could never secure any compensation.

The Minister for Mines: What caused the fire?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Railway construction work, not Collie coal burnt in a locomotive.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Why not increase the width of the firebreaks?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: It has been suggested.

Mr. Harrison: Have they any iron deposits near that coal?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: We do not know what we have in Western Australia; we did not know we had the hon. member till the last elections. I am afraid the Committee are not treating this question as seriously as it deserves. I am keen on giving this coal industry a lift along.

Mr. Heitmann: What about the mining estimates?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I have not got away from the subject? I say more attention should be devoted to the Collie coal industry.

The Minister for Mines: I hope the coal is not going to overshadow the goldfields.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: No, it is not likely. The Minister has dealt very capably with the broad question of mining. Because of existing prejudice, Collie coal is being retailed at a price which scarcely allows it to compete successfully against the imported article.

Mr. George: The price asked is too much.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I believe that if we could maintain the present consumption through the summer months, if we could get rid of the summer embargo, it would result in true economy, because it would materially assist in building up the local industry. On the Kurrawang railway there is in use to-day a special spark arrester. It is being tried by Mr. Hedges who, although not much in politics, is a fairly practical man when it comes to the running of railways. His spark arrester is a distinct success.

Mr. Bolton: No.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The hon. member, like a good many other railway experts, is out against Collie coal for use on locomotives. As soon as a spark arrester is given a trial, he is ready to condemn it. There are so many of the same mind in the Railway Department. I have taken a dozen different men with inventions to the Railway Department.

Mr. George: How many have gone to Claremont.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: You require to be careful or you will find yourself there some day. I venture to say that if Dr. Montgomery watched some of your antics at times he would have another patient.

Mr. Heitmann: It is the usual end of genius.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: However, to put another man into Claremont is not going to promote the further consumption of Collie coal. This spark arrester is spoken of highly by Mr. Hedges, and also by the member for Nelson (Mr. Willmott), who is absolutely convinced that it is a success.

Mr. Heitmann: I hear it is carried in the guard's van.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The hon. member has heard a lot. He would be a far more effective unit of the State's population if he did not take so much notice of what he hears. The member for South Fremantle (Mr. Bolton), like so many other locomotive experts, is biased against the use of the local coal. I suppose it is much harder to work than the imported coal.

Mr. Willmott: Not with this spark arrester.

The CHAIRMAN: What has this to do with the Estimates?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I am endeavouring to demonstrate that the Collie coal mining industry could be advanced considerably by the adoption of the spark arrester mentioned by the member for Nelson if it proves effective. I wish to impress on the Minister that I sincerely trust, if the device should prove effective, the Government will adopt it. It has been shown by Mr. Hedges, who is a practical man, that this spark arrester is of material assistance—

Mr. Willmott: Give it a trial without prejudice.

The Premier: They do not burn coal on the Kurrawang line.

Mr. Willmott: No, they burn wood, which is worse.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: It is claimed that the spark from Collie coal does not linger so long as the spark from the imported article. Anyhow, I desire merely that this should be given a fair trial. I ask the Premier to consult the Commissioner of Railways and his engineers and give this a sympathetic trial. It will cost nothing, and if it does not prove successful we shall be able to fall back on the method of making fire breaks to minimise the danger to the crops. If the Government used Collie coal exclusively on the railways, and if it were used for all domestic supplies, it would mean a lot to the industry, and every member who supports the industry to this end will receive the support of the people, and will never have reason to regret his action.

Mr. GEORGE (Murray-Wellington) [8.17]: The hon. member for Forrest has taken up the mantle of the member for Collie as regards the Collie coal industry. The only united effort which would give the hon. member and the people of Collie any satisfaction would be a united vote of this House which would have the effect of over-riding the conclusions of previous Commissioners of Railways in connection with Collie coal, and over-riding the authorities of the department, who have given fair and sympathetic trials on every occasion when this matter has come before them. Regarding the spark arresters, the member for South Fremantle knows that some few years ago the department was flooded with inventors of these devices. The lives of the engine-drivers were made a misery when trying these spark arresters, in consequence of the accusations that the trials were not fair, though every effort was made by the men on the railways to assist this native industry of Western Australia.

Mr. Willmott: Go and see them working it.

Mr. GEORGE: The hon. member is not speaking from the same experience as the member for South Fremantle or myself.

Mr. Willmott: Admittedly.

Mr. GEORGE: I will not permit anyone to even hint that the trials were otherwise than fair and without prejudice, or were carried out with a view other than to assist a native industry, and I am sure the same attitude is adopted to-day.

The Premier: More so.

Mr. GEORGE: The hon. member remarked about the lack of cohesion among the colliery proprietors, but one of the greatest troubles is the lack of cohesion in the Collie coal itself. One has only to go to Kalgoorlie to find mounds and mounds of the debris of Collie coal which has succumbed to the influence of the weather.

Hon. Frank Wilson: No.

Mr. GEORGE: Yes, there is a bank from Kalgoorlie to Coolgardie made of nothing else than the debris of Collie coal. We wish to extend the use of Collie coal and I would suggest that if arrangements could be made by which, on the far distant lines, Newcastle coal could be used exclusively, it might be found that in other districts it would be possible to use a far larger proportion of Collie coal. When Dr. Jack sat as a Royal commissioner 12 or 13 years ago—the evidence is well worth reading—one of the conclusions he arrived at was that for Collie coal used at Kalgoorlie and beyond, the department should be paid 2s. 6d. a ton for every ton used. Dr. Jack went into the question very carefully, and I suggest that on the far distant lines Newcastle coal could be used exclusively, because every ounce of it is of use and every ounce of Collie coal is not, and there might then be a possibility of using more Collie coal.

Mr. Heitmann: How will that affect the use of Collie coal in other parts?

Mr. GEORGE: They are using coal in the proportion of 20 per cent. Newcastle and 80 per cent. Collie, but Dr. Jack laid it down very clearly in his re-

port that the most economical mixture would be 33 per cent. Newcastle and the balance Collie coal. I suppose it was through political influence, which is not supposed to prevail but goodness knows we have had enough of it in this State, that the proportion was altered to 20 per cent. Newcastle and 80 per cent. Collie.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Dr. Jack was viewing it from the standpoint of 9s. for Collie coal against 15s. 4d. for Newcastle coal.

Mr. GEORGE: Dr. Jack was brought over here at great expense to the State, and I have no hesitation in saying he was brought over more to try to ram Collie coal down the throats of the railway people than for any other reason.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Not at all.

The Premier: That is a bit of a spark arrester.

Mr. GEORGE: I do not care what Government were in power; I repeat that he was brought over simply to try to ram the Collie coal *volens volens* down the throats of the Railway Department, irrespective of the interests of the State.

Mr. Foley: That is a very strong statement to make.

Mr. GEORGE: The member for Forrest spoke about Collie coal being sold at £2 8s. a ton in Perth. I do not know whether that is so.

Hon. Frank Wilson: That is wrong.

Mr. GEORGE: I was under the impression that only the poor fruitgrowers and other producers in this State were fleeced by the middlemen or whatever they are called, but it seems that the consumers of Collie coal must be suffering similarly if they are paying £2 8s. a ton for it.

Mr. Male: They are not.

Mr. GEORGE: I noticed also that Newcastle coal was costing something over £3 a ton.

The Premier: It was being delivered in Perth 12 months ago for 21s. a ton. I take it that is by the single bag.

Mr. GEORGE: What is the Control of Trade Commission doing?

The Premier: It has been knocked out.

Mr. GEORGE: Then we can hope that the price of coal will now go down. Re-

ference has been made to the cutting of breaks in the farmers' fields. I am afraid there is not much chance of getting the farmers to agree to that. I remember receiving deputations from farmers in connection with this matter, and it was suggested that the risk of fires would be lessened if they cut for hay a good swathe near to the railway during the early portion of the season. This proposal was rejected by the farmers, and very indignantly too. I think this would help very much. As to the proneness of Collie coal to sparking, one can get a demonstration of that by travelling to Fremantle nearly every night in the week. While it is true that these sparks go out fairly quickly, there is such a stream of them that it would be neither just nor fair to run any risk of setting fire to the crops. Do members realise what it would mean in our wheat areas if, when the crops were ripe for the harvest, a fire broke out? It would be criminal to incur such a risk, and with all the outcry of the people of Collie, as voiced by the hon. member, regarding the lack of work for the miners, I do not believe the miners desire that their livelihood should be obtained at the risk of destroying the livelihood of other people. They want more work. The trouble has been that there have been too many men and too many mines for the amount of work the State could absorb. Even supposing an extra 20 per cent. of Collie coal was used on the railways, how much more employment would it give to the men at present at Collie? It would certainly make some difference, but should we run the risk of destroying the livelihood, nay more, the whole of the savings, of a class of men who have worked hard and have suffered from bad times during the last two or three years—the wheat farmers—on the off-chance of providing a little more work for the people of Collie? So far as the spark arrester is concerned, I believe that George Stevenson, with his first engine, the "Rocket," tried this device, and every engineer since then, on beginning his apprenticeship, has started out with the idea that if he could devise an efficient spark arrester his fortune would be made.

Mr. Bolton: So it would.

Mr. Willmott: Do you say it never will be invented?

Hon. Frank Wilson interjected.

Mr. GEORGE: No one knows better than the hon. member that all coal sparks more or less, but that Collie coal sparks more rather than less. It is because of this and because we desire to restrict the risk of fire in our agricultural areas that we are taking this stand.

The Premier: The other difficulty is that the Collie spark is lighter and carries further with the wind.

Mr. GEORGE: I would not have said so much but for the remarks of the member for Forrest, and I desire to emphasise that the officials of the Railway Department are absolutely fair in their tests of these devices. Even if the heads of the department were unfair, which I deny, the men who have to carry out the tests would not be such dolts as to block an invention which must mean a lot, not only to themselves, but to the livelihood of their fellow-men.

Mr. BOLTON (South Fremantle) [8.30]: It seems almost like an intrusion for one to speak on the mining Estimates generally. I have been wondering whether the Minister who is in charge of this division of the Estimates has asked me to fix up this joke so that we shall not discuss metals and minerals, but devote our attention entirely to coal. As a matter of fact the discussion has been purely on coal mining. The hon. member for Forrest (Mr. O'Loghlen) agitated for an increased consumption of Collie coal of 20 per cent., that is from 80 per cent. to 100 per cent. That is next door to impossible. Twenty per cent. of the Newcastle coal brought into this State is largely made up of supplies landed at Geraldton. It is Newcastle coal exclusively which is brought here. A greater percentage is used to-day than ever was used before, and its use is on the increase. The hon. member assumed that the locomotive engine-drivers were the natural enemies of Collie coal. They are nothing of the kind.

Mr. Foley: They do not like it very much.

Mr. BOLTON: The engine-drivers have had a bad time in regard to Collie coal. They were not supplied with true Collie coal, but for the most part with shale. When they started to use Collie coal they found it necessary to alter the locomotives in order that they could deal properly with it. Collie coal does not make cinders; that is a great point of difference between it and Newcastle coal. When you open a door to feed a fire which is made up of Collie coal that is when the draught causes the streams of sparks to come out. Of course one must open the door to get the coal in. When one fires with Newcastle coal, however, the same disturbing result is not found, for the reason that there is more live coal and more adhesion of the parts. The moment one opens the door to fire Collie coal one dislodges a quantity of fine dust which is not very much heavier than the air itself. All the attempts to prevent the emission of sparks from Collie coal by means of spark arresters have proved futile. As a practical man myself, I would welcome any spark arrester which was proved to be successful. This country has spent thousands of pounds on these devices, especially in the time when Mr. Rotherham was Chief Mechanical Engineer. In those days the drivers used to term these spark arresters "train arresters." They were never spark arresters at all.

The Premier: If you try to prevent sparks coming out by stopping the draught you prevent the raising of steam.

Mr. BOLTON: It is necessary to use forced draught to get up steam. It is impossible to have the necessary steaming properties in a boiler unless this is done. It is a pity we have not discovered some form of spark arrester which will deal successfully with Collie coal. Indeed, there has never been a successful spark arrester for any class of coal. The heaviest coal is the Welsh coal, and that is the most successful, but in this country it is better to deal with the Collie coal. As I said before, the locomotive engine-driver is not the natural enemy of Collie coal, but its natural enemy is

the Railway Department, and the member for Murray-Wellington (Mr. George) when Commissioner of Railways was one of its most bitter opponents. He dealt with the matter from the commercial aspect from his point of view, and if one believed his arguments there was much to be said from his side of the question. Every year in his report the Commissioner of Railways asks for a sum of money to be set aside to pay for the loss he is still incurring through having had to use Collie coal. He asks why this loss should have to be made good every year as a result of the work of the previous Commissioner, instead of the money going directly to his vote. If members will look back for years past they will see the same remark in the Commissioner's report. He does not consider it is economical to use it. He claims that, because he must use it, his men have been unable to work to schedule time. I have had experience in the use of Collie coal, for I was the first man to use that coal on the first engine which was built for the purpose and which was fitted with what are known as "rockerbars," by the use of which device it was possible to get rid of the ash and to see the inside of the furnace. On a smooth even grade Collie coal is not so troublesome, but on a heavy grade it is difficult to generate sufficient steam. One has to be constantly firing, and this is proved by the amount of coal that is consumed on each trip and the sparks being emitted all the time. Of course there are some districts where it does not matter how many sparks are thrown out. Take the journey from Midland Junction to Chidlow's Well. It does not matter how the sparks fly along there because there is nothing to burn, and it does not matter how many times the doors are opened for firing.

Mr. Heitmann: It is not economical if the fire doors are opened too frequently.

Mr. BOLTON: If the hon. member knew how much coal has to be shovelled in on the journey between Midland Junction and Chidlow's Well, where the grade is exceptionally heavy, he would

understand how frequently the firemen would have to open the door.

The Premier: You want bidders out instead of firemen.

Mr. BOLTON: Our engine-drivers have had to burn Collie coal for a good many years now, and because of the frequency with which the stoking has had to be done and because of the quantity of ash which has had to be removed, the firemen can well be termed "bidders out." When coal is put into the firebox it has to go somewhere. A great deal of it goes out in smoke, but a large quantity of it drops into the ash pans in the form of powder. No special provision was made for the raking out of Collie coal, five times as much of which has to be done with Collie coal as has to be done with Newcastle coal. The firemen, therefore, have had to crawl in between the wheels and rake out all this floury stuff which had accumulated. Hon. members doubtless have often seen the firemen, when they have emerged after this particular job which can be termed "bidding out." There is some bidding out as well as bidding in. All these objections could easily be overcome if the department were only sympathetic in the matter, and were to effect the necessary alterations. Because they were not sympathetic this prejudice to Collie coal grew up amongst the firemen. Again, if the firemen had been supplied with the best Collie coal, instead of being obliged to use so much shale and rubbish, much of the prejudice which exists to-day would never have existed at all. There are services in which Collie coal can be made use of to advantage as against Newcastle coal. It would surprise hon. members to know how much shovelling of Collie coal has to be done on the road between Midland Junction and Chidlow's Well. With regard to the question of whether the department was fair in the past or not in this matter, perhaps I can give one instance in which they were not over fair, and in this case the question did not rest with the heads of the department. The engine-drivers had a prejudice against someone else who introduced something

which they themselves thought they should have been able to think out. A patent ash pan was permitted to be used and was used and adopted for two years.

Mr. Foley: On a point of order, I would like to know in what part of the Mining Estimates ash pans are included, and under what mining head ash pans can be said to come.

The CHAIRMAN: I should be very much obliged if someone could point out to me what spark arresters have to do with the Estimates. I have been unable to find out.

Mr. Foley. That being so, I am going to ask if the hon. member is in order in speaking on ash pans in the manner in which he is doing on the Mines Estimates.

The CHAIRMAN: I have allowed hon. members to speak on the question of coal. It is certainly a mining question, and I cannot stop the hon. member.

Mr. BOLTON: I do not see how you could rule otherwise, Mr. Chairman. I have only done what other members have done in speaking in regard to Collie coal. I can understand the natural prejudice of those who have only worked for metals and have no interest in the coal mining industry. Nevertheless I know that the hon. member who has temporarily taken the place of the member for Collie (Mr. A. A. Wilson) must be pleased with this reception of the Collie coal question. When that hon. member returns he will be able to report that the prejudice of a good many members of this Chamber has been broken down.

Vote put and passed.

This concluded the general debate on the Estimates of the Minister for Mines; votes and items were discussed as follows:—

Vote—*Woods and Forests*, £9,680:

Item—*Clerk-in-Charge*, £300.

Mr. GEORGE: Does not the Minister think that the time has arrived when a department of this importance should be placed in charge of some permanent head? It is many years ago now since the late Mr. Ednie Brown left the department and since it

has been run by a gentleman who occupies the position of acting Conservator of Forests. This temporary position has now been in existence for many years. Others besides myself will be glad to know if the department is to receive the attention which its importance requires. The timber industry has been the means of giving employment to 10,000 people in the State. There are probably 10,000 to 15,000 men actively engaged in the industry, and if we include their dependents we shall find that fully 50,000 people are vitally interested in it. The industry should now be placed in the hands of someone with sufficient experience to know how to guide it. The Minister knows whether the acting Conservator is suited to the position or not. If he is suited he should be given his chance; if not, we should have a man who is capable.

Mr. WILLMOTT: Where is this department? It is extraordinary that a department which is estimated to produce such a large revenue should have apparently disappeared altogether. It is extraordinary that it should have vanished without leaving any trace whatsoever. I must also again voice a protest against the non-appointment of a Conservator of Forests. I spoke on the same subject last year. It is with regret I express my grave doubt whether the estimate of £42,500 for this year's revenue will be realised. In view of the war and the difficulty of obtaining tonnage, I fear there will be a heavy falling off. I trust that some of the promises made regarding the issue of licenses to sleeper cutters and the purchasing by the Government of sleepers will be fulfilled. It is true that licenses are issued, but the sleepers, unless sold through the State sawmills, may not be sold at all. I am well aware that the State sawmills have something like 800,000 sleepers in stock. In my opinion there will be no difficulty in disposing of even a much larger number of sleepers when the war is over. If parcels of sleepers can be sold to private buyers even at something less than the current price, it should be permitted. I am certain there would be no loss to the State

in the long run if my advice were followed. In spite of the official declarations to the contrary, I feel sure there will be heavy deterioration in the sleepers now stacked, because the ends are not dressed. The summer is coming on, and the present system of stacking will mean heavy loss. I wish also to protest against the appointment of inspectors by the manager of the State sawmills to inspect timber cut by the State sawmills. All timber inspectors should be directly under the control of the Forestry Department. The present principle is absolutely wrong, and the result will be condemnation of our timber at the other end of the world. The manager of the State sawmills naturally wishes to keep up his output, and if an inspector under his control throws out timber to such an extent as to affect the output, he will naturally try to get rid of that inspector and secure in his place another who will be more lenient.

Mr. Foley: Does not the manager think of the inspection at the other end?

Mr. WILLMOTT: Evidently he does not. We have had to eat dirt in the matter of rejection of our sleepers in South Africa.

Mr. O'Loughlen: That applies more to the private sawmills.

Mr. WILLMOTT: In the past the inspectors were interfered with by a late Minister for Lands, when they were doing good and honest work. As a result the inspectors lowered the standard, and thereupon £2,000 worth of sleepers were condemned at the port of delivery.

Hon. Frank Wilson: When was this?

Mr. Foley: Who was the Minister?

Mr. WILLMOTT: The member for Northam (Hon. J. Mitchell). The hewers complained that the inspection was too severe.

Hon. Frank Wilson: No doubt it was.

Mr. WILLMOTT: One cannot be too severe in adhering to the specification.

Hon. Frank Wilson: I have seen many a good sleeper rejected.

Mr. WILLMOTT: The inspector's duty is to see that a sleeper is up to specification.

Mr. O'Loughlen: If a police constable were to carry out his regulations strictly, there would be civil war.

Mr. WILLMOTT: I have pointed out for years that the specifications are too severe, that absurd specifications are accepted. Lately sleepers have been thrown out because they were not cut to a neat quarter. The Minister in charge of the department knows, or should know, that at Manjimup sleepers were thrown out because they were not cut half an inch over size to allow for shrinkage. Why should a hewer be called upon to make that allowance gratis? It is absolutely wrong. The department will never give satisfaction unless an Inspector General of Forests is appointed with sole control of our forests and sole control of all inspection.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I am hardly due again to speak, but the member for Murray-Wellington (Mr. George) and the member for Nelson (Mr. Willmott) have spoken on this vote. I realise there is very little use in discussing forestry matters and the pursuing of a vigorous policy of reafforestation. That policy requires funds, and Western Australia has not the funds at present.

Mr. Willmott: That is why I did not touch on that subject.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Even if the funds were available, public support for such a policy is not forthcoming. The subject is the most difficult in the world to get people interested in. What may be termed a forest conscience has never yet been awakened from one end of Australia to the other. Owing to the big fillip given by the Governor General, Sir Ronald Munro Ferguson, who is not only a practical forester but has derived enormous revenue from laying down his Scottish estates with timbers, the forest leagues of New South Wales and Victoria have had a little life galvanised into them. The forest league of Western Australia, after a year's earnest work, numbers less than a dozen members. It seems that the people of Western Australia, instead of looking to the future, are concerned with the present, and are eager to develop only such industries as will

yield quick returns. A forestry policy does not yield a return for two or three decades, though then the return is absolutely sure. As regards the soft-wood plantation of the department, I still think the planting is being done in too expensive a country. Instead of putting the men at the Exhibition building on to clearing in King's Park, it would be better to set them to work on the 2,000 acres at Albany reserved for softwoods. Then some practical good would result from their work. In South Australia, where I was born, they started, after I was born, laying down a pine plantation near the place where I was born. When I was over there two years ago, the Liberal Government were realising £200 per acre from the plantation. In Australia softwoods come to maturity in about a third of the time that they need in Europe. Western Australia has not at present any softwood to put on the market, and will not have for some years to come. Possibly we shall be able to supply some of our requirements in 10 years' time. Like the member for Murray-Wellington (Mr. George) I deplore the partial paralysis in the hardwood trade. As soon as the war is over there will, however, be so much rebuilding activity in the various countries which have been devastated, that our hardwood trade will boom. This applies particularly to the two chief consumers of our hardwoods, Africa and India. In fact, orders are procurable to-day in both Africa and India. Just prior to the war £2,000,000 was allocated by the Imperial Government for railway extension in India, but owing to the financial stress consequent on the war the allocation has been cancelled. Acting on representations from the Agent General, who was prompted by the Government, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Sir Lewis Harcourt, had a fairly large amount of that replaced on the Estimates, and the Indian railway building policy is going on to a small extent. Unfortunately however, just as we were to get a share of the trade, the shipping freights bounded up to an abnormal height with the result that to-day it is impossible to procure

bottom to take the timber to Indian ports, and the Indian Board, instead of using Western Australian hardwoods are using up inferior timber which will only last a third of the time. Once we get the shipping freights back to normal there will be a huge revival in the timber trade, and as Western Australia is the only State with a surplus, and will be able to satisfy the demands of all these countries, the industry will be in for a good time. Every sleeper that the Government has to-day in stock, and every bit of scantling will find a ready market, if we can afford to wait for a little while. The member for Nelson states that instead of pursuing the dog in the manger policy by saying that the State sawmills shall not allow private contractors to come in and cut, we should throw open our Crown lands, and let private contractors come in, in order that employment might be found for men during these bad times. Let us analyse the position and find out how the legitimate timber firms view this. The biggest timber trading concern in Australia, if not in the world, Millar's Trading Company, cried a halt by closing down some months ago. I do not know that I would be justified in charging them with having cold feet, in view of the balance sheet which they recently presented. But the fact remains that they closed down. Other firms have been struggling on, but the exporting firms were hard hit owing to a variety of reasons, which are obvious to hon. members. We find that the State Sawmill Department took over the employment of a large number of men, and when I tell hon. members that 2,600 men have been thrown out of employment since Christmas, it will be realised what a blow the timber industry has received. The State Sawmill Department not only kept their mills going but completed contracts on 36 hours a week, which barely gives a living to the men employed. They not only did that but kept on a large number of hewers, quite recently as many as 700 men. I admit that there are only 250 men on now because stocks are exceptionally large. The only orders which have been received lately have been those

from the Commonwealth. The last Commonwealth contract of any importance was tendered for by Millars and by firms not having a stick of timber, and by the Co-operative Society and the State Sawmills, and we find that quite a number of small orders were let to men at ridiculously low prices. These firms were bound to enter on private concessions, otherwise they could not have shown a penny profit. I have been condemned severely by the sleeper cutters, but I have convinced them that the action I have taken is right. I admit that the Government are not able to carry this army of men right through. I recognise that what the Government have done, they have done under exceptional difficulties, and if it had been left to private enterprise the industry would have been absolutely extinct. In the Collie district one or two gentlemen have secured from the Commonwealth Government small contracts. Some have private paddocks in which to cut, others have not, and they have not only hewers, but the trading association and others behind them to force the Government to throw open Crown lands so that they might complete the orders they have secured from those lands. They offered better cutting rates than the State Sawmills Department, but where would we land the Government if we encouraged that? One of these gentlemen came to Perth and asked for certain Crown lands, but was refused. He then went to Millars to assist him but Millars declined to help him, and advised him to go to the Government to secure Crown land. He said that perhaps Millars might allow him to go on their country, but they were not prepared to do that. I have no desire to jump on the small man, but I have every regard for the future of the timber trade, and for Millars, the State Sawmills, Lewis & Reid, and other legitimate traders who have to employ staffs. In submitting quotations for the supply of timber, all these firms have to make provision for the payment of their staffs. The individuals picking the eyes out of Crown lands, and with cheap freights to the seaboard, are able to reduce the price so that a firm like Millars, for instance,

cannot compete against them. Is it not better, therefore, to keep out such an individual rather than demoralise the trade altogether and prevent the reputable firms, and even the State Sawmills from competing. If we let those individuals in on the small orders we will have to let them in on the big orders. These individuals who tender for contracts select a certain locality, Collie for instance, and the freight to the seaboard is 12s. How could the State Sawmills compete against them under those conditions, because, in order to distribute their employment, they have to average their prices when putting in a quote to the Federal Government, or in connection with an oversea order. I am convinced it would have been a bad day for the timber industry if Crown lands had been thrown open indiscriminately for those people to exploit them in these times. We could not throw open Crown lands without doing an injury to the people who have stocks cut waiting for the market which will come. If we let one in we must let the lot in, and the State sawmills would not be justified in allowing competition on those lines. We have about a million sleepers cut and I understand the department are taking steps to paint the ends of them because there is no immediate likelihood of a market being found for them, and unless they are painted they are likely to split and so will be rendered unsaleable. I do not think private contractors should be allowed to come in, and I view it from the employers' as well as from the employees' point of view. A few men may get work and perhaps better prices, and if people like those I have described secure land, they must get orders somewhere. The hon. member also referred to the fact that the State Sawmill Department inspectors should not have been appointed.

Mr. Willmott: They should be under the Woods and Forests Department.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I wish that happy arrangement could be brought about. Wherever the State Sawmills Department put a gang of men they must have an officer in charge, and that officer is the man to inspect. He may be taken

over by the Woods and Forests Department, but to-day we find that the inspectors of the Woods and Forests Department, owing to the falling off in trade, do not know how to put in their time. When I was in Collie a week ago there were four rangers there. I found that the State sawmills inspector was doing practically the whole of the inspection, as well as supervision of the men there. I know four of the inspectors, all of whom are really good men and are competent judges of timber, but there should be some arrangement between the two departments whereby they might devote portion of the time to forestry work, and whenever an inspector put his hammer on a sleeper, that sleeper should be regarded as a good commodity to go out of the country. We must give the State Sawmill Department a sufficient number of officers to control their men and to see that the department gets a fair deal. The hon. member made a complaint against the member for Northam, in regard to the action of a passer. I believe that the hon. member is on the wrong track. There were 147 men sleeper-cutting and a passer came along and rejected 625 sleepers which were considered by an overwhelming majority of the men to be good timber.

Mr. Willmott: Who was the passer?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Hastie.

Mr. Willmott: It is not the same case.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: It is the only case the member for Northam interfered with. Those sleepers were rejected by Hastie. The member for Murchison, who was then secretary of the timber workers union, asked the Minister to go with him to Worsley and to examine those sleepers and he also took with him a ranger from the Forestry Department, and the result was that 514 out of the 625 were put back, an indication that the inspector was quite wrong. Not one of those sleepers was condemned in Africa, where they were sent.

Mr. Willmott: That is a different case altogether.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I would like the hon. member to tell me when at any other time the member for Northam

interfered in a dispute about the rejection of sleepers. On that occasion the then Minister took the only course he could. The hon. member has a remedy for the trouble, which I do not agree with. It is to reject those sleepers and substitute a second-grade sleeper. It was a disastrous policy as pursued in Victoria.

Mr. Willmott: We should have three grades of sleepers.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: No, it is better to keep the hewer up to the one grade; but do not give the rangers the opportunity of defrauding the sleeper cutter by giving him a second-class price for a first-class article, as has been done in Victoria.

Mr. Willmott: What about the sleeper with pinholes?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: If it does not come up to standard, reject it.

Mr. Willmott: But such a second-class sleeper could go into your sidings.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Most rejected sleepers are rejected for other defects. Exception has been taken in respect to the necessity for neatness, in some cases it being required to come within an eighth of an inch. The State Sawmills are driving a hard bargain with the sleeper cutter, just as do private mill owners. The reason why they were so particular with this order was that the sleepers were for the English railways, the State Government having secured an order for half a million sleepers for the British railways.

The Minister for Works: There will be some more for France.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Yes. Sir Newton Moore has been doing some good work in France. Sleepers in England are not supposed to hold a dogs-pike, and they have to be perfect. So much so, that it has been deemed impossible to cut them with the axe, that instead they must be cut with the saw. The State department placed out a lot of those sleepers; we have so many expert cutters who can get it down to a fraction, that in order to keep the axemen employed the order was placed out. I am pleased to think that the men have been able to do it

although they had such a difficulty in filling the order. There is the question of the conservator of forests. For 18 years now this has been a hardy annual. The nearest we ever got to scouring a first class man was when the leader of the Opposition, then Premier, engaged Mr. Norman Jolly, of South Australia, as headmaster of the Technical School. Unfortunately, some hitch occurred at the last moment, and he never came to Western Australia. He is a keen forestry expert, having studied not only in Australia, where he was born, but also on the Continent, and I think he knows more about forestry than does any other man in the Commonwealth. He was appointed to the Forestry Department in South Australia, and after three months there he received an appointment as conservator in Queensland, where he still is. I only wish we had him here. The hardest man in the world to find is a conservator of forests who has both the clerical knowledge and the field knowledge. It is easy to get a man with either, but very difficult to combine both qualities in the one individual. When good times come again in Western Australia, we must give more attention to this question. In fact, one might almost say that the worse the times the greater the necessity for utilising our Great Southern district behind Albany for the planting of our *pinus insignis*. Albany is one of the prettiest of towns, and I believe if we had on those sandhills behind the port—where they will grow without much attention—sturdy pine forests, it would give a very much better impression of the State to new arrivals, besides being a most valuable asset. We know how well *pinus insignis* will grow here. Western Australia leads the way in point of hardwoods, and for the next ten years or so we will enjoy a fairly good export trade. After that, we will have to look out for the deluge. We are going to meet the same fate as all other countries have met by the destruction of their lumber resources. America to-day is awaking to the condition of her timber industry, and realising that it is worth preserving. I

had a letter the other day from a friend who says they are doing magnificent work. While Germany may be, and is, responsible for an immense amount of human misery in the world, it cannot be denied that she leads the world in her forestry department. Japan comes next, but here in Australia we have been utterly indifferent to the future needs of our country and the national necessity for conserving our forests. We have done practically nothing whatever. We have merely exhausted our resources without looking to the future.

Mr. Willmott: Living on our capital.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Yes, and it is pretty limited just now. But they are moving rapidly in the Eastern States to recover some of the lost position. We have not lost ours yet, and if we get to work in time we will never lose it, because the timber industry if properly cared for is all-enduring. The present Government have saved the timber industry, and so brought about the comparative prosperity of those living in some of our South-West districts, where the timber industry for 20 years past has been the commercial and industrial mainstay. The Government have done much to retain that industry, although in regard to the forestry they have done but little. I hope when good times return they will be alive to the needs of the future, and will embark on a bold, progressive policy in regard to the conservation of our timber resources.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Some years ago we set aside sleeper cutting areas for railway and timber purposes. For years the Railways had these reserves allotted to them. In 1909 I asked the Railway Department to apply for an area from which to get their railway sleepers for all time. A reserve of 750,000 acres was set aside at the request of the then Minister. Does the Minister still hold that land for railway purposes, or is it contemplated to utilise this area in connection with the commercial business of the State sawmills, to erect mills on this reserve for the purpose of export? It will be a great pity if the Minister allows this to be done.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: A lot of it is very poor country.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It was the best available at the time, and I hope it will not be cut into by the Minister's mills for export purposes. It is necessary to the Railways and ought to be kept. I confess a good deal more might be done to protect our timber. The jarrah country ought to be reserved for jarrah purposes. Reafforestation goes on rapidly in jarrah country. I believe the organised planting of jarrah will not be successful, because jarrah is very slow growing. Nature will best look to it herself. I am not very sure whether the pine planting is going to be a commercial success. When we capitalise the enormous amount spent in clearing and preparing and planting, I am not sure that the return to be expected will cover interest on the outlay. However, pine plantations ought to be established here and there, if only as a test. In regard to those rejected sleepers. I hold that it is the Minister's duty to look into these complaints when they come along. Inspectors do not always faithfully carry out their duties. Sometimes, even when they desire to do that, they overstep the mark, while at other times they evade their work altogether. They will report on a block which they have never seen, or pass sleepers and timber which they have scarcely glanced at. The only time I interfered was at the request of the member for Murchison (Mr. Holman). I went down and found that the men had some cause for complaint, although certain of the sleepers were a little thicker than they ought to have been.

Mr. Willmott: It was the people shipping them who kicked up the row.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: No, they did not; they were with me when I saw the sleepers. All the men were satisfied with the conclusion I arrived at. Certainly there was no loss, so far as I know. No doubt people lose money in the timber as in every other business. It is very easy for the member for Nelson to make such statements. Was not it my duty to see that justice was done to the sleeper hewers? I am surprised that the hon.

member finds fault because I did what even members opposite approve of, and surely when they approve of it, it must have been right. It would be just as right to say that, owing to the work of the inspector when the member for Nelson was not inspector, the company lost £50,000. There is no doubt the right thing was done. The member for Forrest refers to the State mills as having saved the timber industry.

Mr. O'Loughlen: So they did.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: These mills will not improve the industry or the position of those who work in the industry. Some time ago I mentioned that a contract had been taken for South Africa at a lower price because of the competition set up by the Government. But for that competition I believe £2,500 more would have been received by the people of the State for that order.

Mr. O'Loughlen: It is possible the Government would not have got the order.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: But for the competition by the Timber Hewers' Association, rendered possible by the help of the Government, this State would have received £2,500 more on that one order alone. I do not see why we should sell the best jarrah sleepers we have—probably the best sleepers in the world—to the people of China, Japan, and South Africa at less than a fair price. The Government competition brought it about on that occasion. I hope the member for Forrest will keep his eye on the mill at Manjimup and see that it does no harm to the industry.

Mr. O'Loughlen: An industry that loses 2,600 men in 10 months is pretty hard hit. The companies got cold feet.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I was rather amused at the speech of the member for Forrest who was very fluent, very quick, and sometimes seemed to get the wrong hang of the question. I could not quite understand his eulogy of the Government, especially the Minister for Lands who refused to grant any permits to outside hewers to hew timber on Crown lands. He seemed in all his expressions to argue that there is a

ring especially now, and he was totally opposed to the opening of Crown lands to the private hewer because it would depreciate the stocks which the State sawmills have already gathered together, and they would probably have to take 10s. a load less. Besides he said it would affect Millars', Lewis & Reid, and the Timber Hewers' Association, so I take it the hon. member has changed from being a democrat and has become a conservative. He is no longer the opponent of rings and combines because he embraced the only combine in Western Australia under that name—Millars'—with the State sawmills in a ring which is not to be injured by the private individual.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Not under certain conditions.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I cannot understand that coming from a democrat. He is now the advocate of a ring—there is no question about it—and everyone else is to go to the wall because, forsooth, the Government have gone into this venture and have to be protected along with Millars', Lewis and Reid, and the Timber Hewers' Association.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Better see a few men without a stick of timber go to the wall than the industry.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I want to see the 2,600 men who he says have been paid off, earning an honest living, and able to go on to Crown lands, hew the timber, and sell it as they think fit. The hon. member spoke about the Government having saved the industry in one breath, and in the next breath he said 2,600 men had been paid off.

Mr. Munsie: By Millars'.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Not by Millars' altogether. The Government have put the hewers off and have put off a large number from the sawmills and to-day the industry is in a parlous condition. Surely that is an argument against the policy he has been eulogising and against which he is supposed to protest in the interests of the worker.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Where will these persons get orders to-day if you open the Crown lands? There would be only a few orders.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Then the hon. member admits they have not got cold feet. The hon. member accused the ring of getting cold feet.

Mr. O'Loughlen: They closed up before they had need to do so.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Then it is through lack of orders that the Government mills are closed.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Bunning's did not close; Whittaker's did not close; Lewis and Reid only partially closed.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Some of Bunning's mills are closed.

Mr. O'Loughlen: They have started again.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I was referring to the timber hewers, the 2,600 men who have lost their livelihood.

Mr. O'Loughlen: Half of them are mill hands.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: As a result of the issue of the foolish regulation by the Government against timber hewers going on to Crown lands, hundreds of timber hewers were thrown out of work.

Mr. O'Loughlen: It did not throw one out; the Government took them over.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Who told them to go to Kurrawang?

Mr. O'Loughlen: I told 600 of them to go there.

The CHAIRMAN: I cannot allow this general conversation to continue.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Many of them got employment at the Government sawmills for a time, but to-day they are out of work. If they had been allowed to follow their avocation, they would probably have been in work.

Mr. O'Loughlen: You know that is not so.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The member for Nelson made a big song about the inspection of sleepers. I am not going to say a word about his attack on the member for Northam because he has already replied to it. I have had many years experience in the timber trade, especially in my early days here, and I say without any hesitation that the Government inspection of sleepers was altogether too severe as carried out on behalf of the Government of this State

and on behalf of other Governments who had their inspection work done by the Forestry Department. Good sleepers were thrown out and condemned, and I need only say that on the hundreds of miles of railways constructed in the timber areas—I suppose I constructed 60 or 70 miles in my time—

Mr. O'Loughlen: With condemned sleepers.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The very rejects of the Government inspectors and they are in the roads to-day, and the Government have taken over some of those railways and are running their trains over them to-day. Those sleepers were all paid for.

Mr. O'Loughlen: How much did they pay for them?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Every sleeper I took was paid for by mutual arrangement. I cannot understand the hon. member's indigation with regard to certain action years ago, nor do I believe that any action taken when we were in power had the terrible effect described by him of lowering the standard so that to-day the price is lower accordingly. They are getting better prices than ever before in the history of the industry, excepting for a little slump recently owing to the difficulties of transit, but taking it all round, better prices are obtainable to-day than during the last 20 years. I would like to see an official of wider experience than a clerk in charge of the head office of this department.

Mr. O'Loughlen: There will be shortly.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The time has arrived, and indeed is past due, when we should have someone in charge of this important department other than the present clerk. It is absurd to expect proper results and satisfactory or economical control with a man who has had absolutely no experience outside the office. At the same time, it must be conceded that the timber in this State is being reduced year by year. It will not last for ever. There are other countries with timber supplies which will come into competition with us as soon as the war is over. We will not get first pull on the market for

everything. Doubtless we will get a fairly good look in, but there are other countries with large quantities of hardwood timber still to tap. This all points to the necessity for having the department reorganised and placed under a proper head. I admit the difficulty. We tried our best to get a suitable gentleman with proper experience, and it proved to be a very difficult matter indeed. We tried for several years but were unable to find a man to fill the position. If such a man is available I hope the Government will get his services quickly. The Government should not endeavour to obtain a monopoly in the timber industry in their State enterprises. In our day we reserved timber country for our own requirements. It is the duty of the Government to see that the requirements of the State are properly cared for and that proper regulations are issued and insisted upon with regard to cutting the forests. The question of reafforestation is an important one but it is going to be a difficult project to handle.

The Minister for Mines: It is a matter of a big expenditure.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I do not care so much about the expenditure; it is a matter of whether the results will be gained. Reafforestation in connection with hardwood timbers is a different proposition to reafforestation in connection with softwoods. In America they can do things with their pine forests which we cannot attempt to do here with our hardwoods. We are making a strong effort, I am glad to see, to cultivate the pine in Western Australia. I hope, notwithstanding that there may be some doubt as to the ultimate profit attached to the proposition, that we shall still go on planting our poorer lands with pine because I believe that, when all is said and done, we may rest assured if the plantations are not destroyed by fire we shall derive some benefit from the venture. We need softwoods in Western Australia, and as much of them as we can get. They are of the utmost benefit in our fruit industry, especially in connection with box making. Some of our pine trial

patches ought to be almost ready for the saw, or will be ready in a few years' time. There is no reason why the quantity should not be increased year by year if we keep on planting each year, or why, after a little time, it should be necessary to import softwoods for local use. The main point to observe when our jarrah forests are cut out, the saw-mills have ceased working and the hewers have had their turn, is that the areas should be closed up and the lands left to reafforest themselves. If that is done, there is no doubt that our jarrah forests will last for many years to come. In my opinion they will not be exhausted in 10 years' time. When I first came to this State, 24 years ago, some lands along the Eastern railway were cut out and almost finished. The area was closed down so far as the cutting of jarrah was concerned some 19 years ago for a period of several years, and now it has been possible for the mills to commence work again and they are cutting jarrah to-day. It shows that with proper care and supervision we can conserve our forests, and in that way we shall be able to look forward to a lengthy period of a fair supply of hard woods.

Mr. O'Loughlen: We can assist nature.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Although we cannot maintain the heavy output we have been able to maintain during the past seven or eight years, we can still have a fair industry and provide sufficient wood for our own requirements, but after all that is perhaps the most important aspect of the whole question.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I hesitate to intervene in the discussion. I have been quite content to listen to the hon. member for Nelson and the hon. member for Forest who possess such a knowledge of the subject and have made such a study of it for years past, to say nothing of the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition. I do not propose to cover the ground already traversed by those hon. members. I wish to say, for the information of the House, that I hope this will be the last occasion on which there will be any cause to complain in regard to the

position of Conservator of Forests. The gentleman who has occupied that position is really the clerk in charge, and he has filled that post for something like 16 or 17 years. It certainly has not been of advantage to our forests or to the State generally that this condition of things should have been permitted to go on. The conservation of our forests is of sufficient importance to warrant the appointment of a man with a thoroughly up-to-date knowledge of the business. Whilst I am not in the position to make any definite announcement I think I can say that this is the last year in which this condition of things will exist. I am hopeful of having a permanent head appointed.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Have you got your eye on a man?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I am negotiating for the appointment of a permanent head, and for the selection of a qualified man for the position. Shortly after I took over the administration of this department I set about looking for someone who would fill the post. Owing to the bad times through which we have been passing, however, there has of necessity been some delay. It will I hope be recognised that this is one of the most difficult positions in the service to fill. There are many positions which might be filled without any difficulty whatever. In this case, however, not only are men capable of filling such a position scarce in Australia but they are hard to find in any part of the world. It is indeed difficult to get hold of a man who has the necessary knowledge, training and experience, particularly with regard to hardwoods. I think, however, this difficulty will be overcome in the near future.

Hon. J. Mitchell: You have not any salary provided for it?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No. I do not hope to get a man for the salary which is being paid to the present occupant of the position. But we shall get over that difficulty. Surely the hon. member would not suggest for a moment that I should refrain from making an

appointment simply because I have not an item provided for it on the Estimates.

Hon. J. Mitchell: You should have one there.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I did not place one there.

Hon. Frank Wilson: We put an item on the Estimates but could not get a man.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: If we can get the man, we shall find the money. I hope the hon. member for Nelson will soften somewhat in his indignation, because he experiences a difficulty in finding out where the new office of the department is situated.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Where is it situated?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member frowned and looked quite angry because he did not know where the office was to be found. I may say that it has been transferred only during the past few days, and I hope in time the hon. member will be able to find his way somewhere to the top floor of the Lands Department where I have no doubt he will discover the office of the Acting Conservator.

Hon. Frank Wilson: You said you did not know where it was.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member assumed, because he did not know where it was himself, that no one else would know.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Have you been in it?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No. I do not propose to go there until I have more time on my hands than I have been able to find during recent months.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Have you the reserves still in existence?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: They have not been interfered with since I have been in office. I do not think they will be interfered with. I recognise it is necessary we should keep fairly large reserves of our forests for our own use. It is not my intention to grant any more forest reserves for milling purposes until a good case can be made out for my doing so. In recent years

there has been too much destruction going on in regard to our forests. Not only has the public at large but Parliament itself has not quite realised the value of our forest areas. I was hopeful of being able to do something to conserve our forests in the matter of reafforestation, but unfortunately during the past year or two I have been unable to do anything in that direction. It is largely a matter of money, and money is more urgently required just now for other purposes.

Hon. J. Mitchell: You have had tons on money for the last two years.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes, but I have not been able to turn it into this channel. We shall probably find ourselves in the position of the other States of the Commonwealth and other countries in the world with regard to the supply of hardwoods, perhaps not in the immediate future, but in the not distant future. It is not, perhaps, impossible or improbable that within 20 or 30 years a State which had such enormous supplies of hardwood will be the position of having to import for its own use.

Hon. J. Mitchell: Not if you keep these reserves intact.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: If we keep the reserves intact for ever they will be of no use to the State. It is not good economy to lock up the reserves and leave them so indefinitely.

Hon. Frank Wilson: That is not what he means. He means to say, for the requirements of the State.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: For Government requirements.

Hon. J. Mitchell: For use by the railways.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: If we find we are not getting the timber out as quickly as it comes to maturity and that it begins to decay it will be much better to make it available in that direction.

Hon. J. Mitchell: It will take thousands and thousands of years to decay.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I do not know about that. I have been informed by those who ought to know that after timber has reached a certain age

a pipe begins to form in the centre and the wood starts to decay. It is much better to make it available for public use and to market it than it is to let it rot, as it were, on the ground. I do not intend to allow any of these reserves to be encroached upon, unless it is found to be in the best interests of the State to interfere with them.

Item—District Forest Rangers (9), £1,824.

Mr. ROBINSON: In view of the fact that so many forest rangers and inspectors now are doing nothing I desire to ask the Minister whether it is necessary to keep all these men on as forest rangers at the present time when little or no timber is being sold.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I would draw the hon. member's attention to the fact that there is a reduction in the item following of from 18 to 14 assistant forest rangers. Even though there may be a falling off in the work to be performed it is necessary to keep forest rangers, in order that they may generally supervise, patrol and look after the forests. The reduction has taken place because of the general falling off in business. It is necessary to maintain the staff of district forest rangers because even though the same amount of timber is not being obtained they have their duties to perform in looking after the forests.

Item—Travelling and forage allowances to rangers, etc., £2,500.

Mr. MUNSIE: While I am prepared to recognise that the forest rangers probably have a difficult duty to perform, in view of the extent of our forests, I observe that the travelling expenses shown here amount to £2,760 per annum, while the total for inspection of mines, including the salary of the State Mining Engineer, is only £4,687. How is the item made up?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The forest rangers are continually travelling. They are scarcely ever for a week in the same place. The allowances are made according to scale. As there are 23 men travelling all the year round, the amount does not seem excessive.

Mr. ROBINSON: Are these inspectors men who pass timber, or are they forest rangers?

The Minister for Mines: They do both kinds of work.

Mr. ROBINSON: Now that we are not cutting nearly so much timber as we were last year, could the item be reduced by £1,000 or £500? I notice the amount is practically the same as last year.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I would certainly not agree to any more expenditure than necessary in this direction, but I am assured by those who ought to know that the amount would be required. Although we are not cutting nearly so much timber as we were in better times, nevertheless the duties of these inspectors continue just the same. They are practically the police of the forests.

Hon. J. Mitchell: You have sleeper passers besides these inspectors.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The State sawmills have sleeper passers, and most of the work of sleeper passing is done for the State sawmills. Our forests cover an immense area, and there is a deal of travelling, which of course involves expense. I do not think it would be safe to cut the item down.

Item—Special allowance to Acting Conservator of Forests, also allowance under Regulation 78, £150.

Mr. FOLEY: Is not the gentleman who is acting as Conservator of Forests competent to fill the position permanently? If he is not competent, what is wanting in him?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I am not prepared to say what is wanting in him, or whether he is competent; but the very fact that he has occupied the acting position, or the position of clerk-in-charge, for the past 16 years, shows that those who have controlled the department during that lengthy period have seen some reason why in his case a permanent appointment should not be made. When the position is being filled, it will be advertised in the usual way by the Public Service Commissioner, and the gentleman in question will have an opportunity of applying for the position just the same as any other applicant.

Mr. FOLEY: I was indeed sorry to hear the Minister deprecate the fact that in Australia we cannot get a man to fill the position.

Hon. Frank Wilson: The Minister did not say that exactly.

Mr. FOLEY: The Minister's statement was to that effect. After all the experience we have had of timber, surely there must be amongst us a man sufficiently versed in the subject to be fitted for the position of Conservator of Forests. I was sorry to hear a native Australian Minister say in an Australian Parliament that there is not in Australia a man competent to fill the position. It is a slight on Australia.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I regret very much that the hon. member did not listen more attentively, I did not say there was not a man in Western Australia, or in Australia, competent to fill the position. I said there was great difficulty in filling the position either in Western Australia or in Australia, which is quite a different thing. I will place my Australianism second to that of no man in this Chamber. If there is an Australian fit to fill a vacancy in any department over which I preside, he will certainly not be passed over for any other person. But I am not going to carry my Australianism to the point of saying that under any and all circumstances an Australian shall be the only man to get any position.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: In view of the fact that the Acting Conservator of Forests had been in charge of the department for 16 years, under successive Ministers, who have all left him in the position notwithstanding that on several occasions applications were called for the conservatorship of forests, Mr. Richardson should be left in charge if the position is to be regarded as an administrative one and a highly trained technical man is not appointed. Mr. Richardson had several years' experience under Mr. Ednie Brown. The position has been regarded as a secretarial one, like those of the Under Secretaries for Lands and Agriculture, which are held by clerical rather than professional men.

Item—Maintaining nursery, and pine, wattle, and sandalwood plantations, £150.

Mr. SMITH: I observe that an expenditure of about £40 each is contemplated for the various matters in this item. Where are the sandalwood plantations, and where are the wattle plantations? What are we growing wattle for?

Member: Tanning.

Mr. SMITH: Mallet bark is much superior to wattle for tanning. Our native mallet bark has practically been extirpated, and it would be better if we took steps to re-establish the mallet-bark industry.

Item—Incidental, including postage, stationery, travelling, advertising, exhibits, live stock, and other miscellaneous charges, £800:

Mr. ROBINSON: The amount against this item is a little more than was actually expended last year. Does not the Minister think that it can be cut down? Travelling has been set down for the rangers under another item, and it cannot be for that. Advertising—surely the department does not have much advertising to do in this weather; exhibits—there are no exhibitions on; live stock—what does the department want with live stock? Does not the Minister think he could excise the whole lot?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I wonder how the Minister can carry on the work of the department with such a small vote. If the work we want done is to be done well, this item is too low.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I was afraid the member for Canning was going to punish me for my economy on this item last year. We considered last year that £1,500 would be necessary, but by the exercise of strict economy I spent only £785.

Vote put and passed.

This completed the Estimates of the Mines and Woods and Forests Departments.

Lands Department (Hon. W. D. Johnson, Minister).

Vote—*Lands and Surveys*, £50,976:

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. W. D. Johnson—Guildford) [10.22]: I do not think it is necessary for me to make any lengthy remarks in regard to the introduction of these Estimates. Members will agree that in the last month or two we have spoken mostly of lands in the big discussions which have taken place in this Chamber. It must be recognised that one has not a great opportunity to paint a glowing picture in connection with land settlement. In the first place we are just recovering from a drought which had a serious effect upon land selection, and instead of the farmers gaining a reward from that which they produced on the land, the Government had to go to the rescue and supply them with that which, under ordinary circumstances, they would have had a surplus of. The effect of the recent drought can be gathered from the following figures. In the year before last we had an average yield of 12.17 bushels per acre. The lowest in any previous year since record have been kept was 7.12 bushels per acre. Last year the average was 1.91 bushels per acre. The production was so small that it had a disastrous effect on land selection. Then of course we have had to suffer as a result of the war and the enlistments in the Empire's forces have drawn to a great extent upon the farmers' sons and those who would have taken up farms for themselves. Despite that, however, we had a certain amount of land selection last year. Under conditional purchase conditions there were 1,514 applications for a total acreage of 502,551, and under leasehold selection there were 1,410 applications for a total area of 7,831,934 acres. The total number of applications was 2,924, and the area 8,344,485 acres. After all, while the conditions were not such as to make land selection very attractive, still we did place a certain number on the land. In regard to those who have gone to the war, and who had already selected, we are extending to them all consideration possible in the direction of their holdings. It is interesting to note in regard to our land selection, just to give some figures to

one would like, we are getting along fairly well, and I anticipate as a result of this year's harvest that there will be no difficulty in settling the land along the several railways, although I do not expect much success in dealing with land farther out.

Hon. J. MITCHELL (Northam): [10.38]: I am sorry this vote has been cut down. Surely it is the one department of all that ought to be kept going. The Minister explains that land settlement has fallen off. That is only natural after the bad season. Yet we find the Midland Railway Company active in land settlement, and they have taken our surveyors. I think we ought to cut up the land and get it settled. The Minister knows that in the cutting up of an area there is always a tail end, and the tail end is left. The light lands have been of considerable value during the last few years, and land comparatively near to railways which had been passed over has since been settled. All the same I should like to see the surveyors employed. Some have found other employment, some have gone to the war, and yet the Minister finds it necessary to reduce the staff of surveyors by two. If the country is to progress it must be through the land. Land settlement must be encouraged. The war will not last for all time. When it is over it should be possible to increase our population, particularly with people to settle our broad acres. There ought to be hundreds of thousands of acres in the South-West to cut up. The timber lands have been classified but the Government are no further forward. They need to cut up the blocks which do not carry marketable timber in order that they might be sold. Right through the South-West there are blocks which will make very good farms.

The Minister for Lands: We have retained the Bridgetown Survey Office for that purpose.

The Premier: You would not recommend cutting up land outside the existing railways?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I do not know the railway policy of the Government. We have railways in that country from

Pinjarra to Manjimup, the Margaret River Railway Bill has been passed, and I suppose the line will be extended from Bridgetown southwards. There is land in that part of the State that ought to be cut up and it is our duty to see that it is cut up and to have farms ready. Take the red gum country in the South-West: if these blocks were surveyed and the timber ring-barked it would be a wise step. After ring-barking it takes three or four years before the trees die. We want surveyors to work in this State, I am convinced of that. The Minister probably knows whether it will be possible after the war is over to encourage settlement on the land, not only by our own men but also by other men who are now fighting. This opportunity should not be lost sight of. We have already discussed at some length the closing of the district survey offices and I do not want to cover that ground again. The Minister is making a mistake in amalgamating the inspecting staffs of the Lands Department and the Agricultural Bank. The Minister knows that under the Act, improvements have to be done on the land for ten years after selection. Year by year inspections have to be made in connection with the improvements. It is one thing to value the work for the Lands Department and it is quite another to value it for the Agricultural Bank. The Minister would not say it would be fair to credit a selector for improvements to the amount the Agricultural Bank is willing to advance.

The Minister for Lands: Is not the man who inspects for the Agricultural Bank capable of inspecting for the Lands Department?

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I doubt if it will work satisfactorily. The Agricultural Bank under Mr. Paterson requires a valuation which will make it perfectly safe to advance considerable sums of money. The limit is £2,000. In connection with the Lands Department we merely wish to know if the necessary improvements have been carried out. The valuation in the one case is totally different from the valuation in the other case. I doubt if any saving will be ef-

fect. It is possible to reconstruct until a shilling becomes threepence and that is what will happen here. There are 50,000 leases under conditional purchase conditions, all of which have to be inspected and in addition there is an enormous amount of work done by the Agricultural Bank.

The Minister for Lands: The burden of your song is that it is totally impossible to economise in this State.

The Premier: No, so long as it does not affect the department in which he took an interest.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I want this work to be done well; it will not be any economy to have the work done badly. It is no economy to sack surveyors.

The Minister for Lands: It is not economical to save expenditure in all ways.

The Premier: That is what you will find with some of the reductions you made the other night.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It is not economical to stop land settlement.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: I am sorry for the 16 men who have got to do the work.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: It is impossible for them to do the work. If there is one department which the Minister should treat generously, it is the Lands Department. If he wants to economise let him go to the State trading concerns and to other departments, including the Treasury. We are talking about economy in connection with the Lands Department and yet I hear the Government have opened another hotel. The member for Irwin (Mr. James Gardiner) remarked upon the transfers to other departments. The senior assistant to the under secretary has been taken from the Lands Department to do duty, I believe, with the Industries Assistance Board. I suppose the board will pay the £450 for his salary so, after all, the £11,000 decrease is merely an amount transferred to other departments. It is not the intention of the Minister to get rid of any of these officers whose services have been lent to other departments, so that this economy is more imaginary than real. There is a point in connection with the pastoral

leases to which I wish to refer. If we are to develop our pastoral country the Government will have to consider the advisableness of extending leases beyond 1928, particularly in regard to new leases, that is the land being leased now. It is not possible for a pastoralist to develop his holding in 12 years. We should encourage the development of our pastoral lands. We should encourage settlement there as we do in other parts of the State. I would like to know the Minister's intention in this regard. It has been brought under his notice more than once. No man will take up pastoral land unless the leases are extended. Of course improvements are paid for when the land is resumed.

The Premier: Not always.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I hope the Minister will have the law amended, seeing that we have a Bill now before Parliament, and will make it possible to extend the new pastoral leases particularly for a considerable term beyond the 12 years now possible.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: Ten years time will be early enough to consider renewals.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I am discussing new leases.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: I thought you included renewals.

The Premier: We cannot do that. Your official journal says we must not because we are personally interested.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I am not referring to existing leases, but to the leasing for a longer term than 12 years of land not now occupied. We have the land there and it ought to be used. There will be no selection of the pastoral lands unless the term can be made for more than 12 years.

The Minister for Lands: They should not be selected for 15 years; even that is too short.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: Of course 15 years is too short a time. I think pastoral leases ought to be for 33 years.

The Premier: We should not permit any more pastoral leases to be taken up until we amend the Act.

Hon. J. MITCHELL: I do not know that any one would take up land unless

the Act is amended and the terms are extended. Apart from that, we want to encourage men with capital to put their money into this industry. The Minister should see if he cannot do something in the way of amending the Act.

Mr. JAMES GARDINER (Irwin) [10.50]: I regret that the Minister for Lands could not speak as cheerfully of his department as did the Minister for Mines speak of his earlier in the evening. It is no good shutting our eyes to the fact, which is painfully apparent, that land settlement is not going on again for some considerable time. I have not shut my eyes to the fact. There are many things which have accounted for the present state of affairs. In the first instance, if we had classified our lands with the same care that the map hanging in this Chamber shows that they have been classified since, there would have been an entirely different tale to tell to the farmer. But the fact that men have been put out, rainfalls guessed at, that men have been put into districts on very unfair classifications, that they have had two or three bad seasons culminating in last year's very bad season, has been, and will continue to be a big deterrent to land settlement. When one can go and buy a farm in the State, or most of the farms at the prices at which they are offering to-day, there is not going to be any flocking of the people into new districts for settlement. One regrets this and says it was an unwise policy. Without throwing any blame upon anyone, because possibly we all more or less participated in this, I would say that behind that the blistered hands and blistered hearts and clogged incentives, there are things from which it will take land settlement in this State a long time to recover. One can go where one will and when one will and these facts will always be brought home. We can learn one valuable lesson from the past, and that is that whatever information the Government give in regard to land settlement, it should be of the same value as we attach to the commandments in the Bible. It should be unassailable. There should be no promises in this way and that way, there should be

no helping of men to wreck their fortunes, and when they have found out their case, saying how sorry we are for them in their sufferings and that Nature is against them; but whatever promises are made, they ought to be made good. I must express some regret that the expenditure in the Lands Department has not been reduced. It is no good shutting one's eyes to the fact, which is apparent, that after all there is only a saving of some £11,500 in this big department. When we look down some of these items and see the increases, surely it shows us that the knife of economy has not been put into the department as deeply as it should be. There cannot be an increase now in the work of the Lands Department. Recoups have been put in where there have been transfers to other departments. These transfers are mystifying to me. I see that in one instance the chief assistant is struck out. Then we find him again under loans to other departments. They come in again and they are taken off again, and there are recoups to other departments. It is very difficult for those of us who want to follow the Estimates intelligently and give every assistance to the Government to see where the Government are exercising that economy which the Premier made the keynote of his Budget Speech. It is a time for us to see that we do exercise economy, and yet how are we to do so when the items we have under consideration may also appear in other parts of the Estimates? There are other things that I can hardly explain, but possibly the Minister will do so. There is an item for draftsmen and geodetic survey. I do not know whether this applies to all surveys, but a geodetic survey is rather bigger in its application than an ordinary survey. It is supposed to take in huge portions of the earth's circumference. We have this department with these draftsmen, and we turn over the page and strike them again. We have the correspondence department, which has increased. We turn over and strike it again. When we come to some individual items I am going to ask that they

should be reduced. At the present juncture there are items put down here for extra clerical assistance which ought not to be necessary in view of the present work of the Lands Department.

The Premier: If there are any increases it will be due to automatic increases over which we have no control.

Mr. JAMES GARDINER: The Premier cannot tell me that extra clerical assistance is necessary at this time. That argument does not go down with me. I can realise that automatic increases may come to some of these officers. We find in the record and correspondence branches that, instead of things going down, they are going up.

The Premier: Where?

Mr. JAMES GARDINER: And yet the Government say that business is falling off. Let us be candid.

The Premier: Where is there extra clerical assistance?

Mr. JAMES GARDINER: The Premier will find it in the Estimates.

The Premier: Where is there an increase for extra clerical assistance?

Mr. JAMES GARDINER: It will be found on page 48. The extra clerical assistance provided here is £2,700 as against an expenditure last year of £2,704. Will the Minister tell us that in the position in which the Lands Department are to-day they want the same amount of extra clerical assistance as they did last year?

The Premier: Did you read the item?

Mr. JAMES GARDINER: It provides for overtime for messengers, caretakers, cleaners, special allowances for temporary draftsmen and various other things. That is a mere bagatelle.

The Premier: These positions must be filled, for they are permanent positions left vacant by men who have gone to the front. If they are filled by temporary officers they have to go on this vote although the positions are permanent ones.

Mr. JAMES GARDINER: Extra clerical assistance cannot come in under the permanent staff.

The Premier: It is not extra clerical assistance.

Mr. Robinson: Why should it be there at all?

The Premier: The Auditor General requires it.

Mr. JAMES GARDINER: We come to the record and correspondence branches and we find increases there.

The Premier: It is not extra clerical assistance. They are permanent positions and they are automatic increases, every one of them.

Mr. Robinson: There is no work for them to do.

Mr. JAMES GARDINER: If the Government have no work for a man to do, do they still give him an automatic increase?

The Premier: If you have nothing for him to do, you just give him an automatic shift.

Mr. JAMES GARDINER: I think it is a fair thing for the State to say, "If we have no work for you, we cannot pay you." That is the policy of cut-to-the-bone, and that is the policy we have to pursue. What I cannot understand is that these people occur again on the Estimates. Am I to understand that the whole of the correspondence clerks and the accounts men are on the fixed staff?

The Premier: Yes.

Mr. JAMES GARDINER: Then, so far as they are concerned, we are just beating the wind and can do nothing.

The Premier: You can reduce them, of course.

Mr. JAMES GARDINER: I want to understand the position clearly. Are we to understand that no matter how little work the Government have, and how overmanned they are, we cannot have these things reduced?

The Minister for Lands: Under the Public Service Act a Minister can abolish an office, but a Minister cannot dismiss a man unless he makes a charge against the man. Parliament, however, can do anything, of course.

Mr. JAMES GARDINER: If that is so, then the Government had better bring down a Public Service Bill before this session closes, so that they may be in a position to carry out the economy they

want to carry out. It is absolutely idle for the Committee to go on discussing these matters if we are faced with the position that we cannot get rid of unnecessary officials.

The Premier: You can abolish the office, and dispense with the officer's services in that way; but then you get a select committee inquiring why you did it.

Mr. JAMES GARDINER: Wages for surveyors' assistants, chainmen, and labourers, have gone up from £2,057 to £2,600. We are getting rid of our surveyors, and yet the expenses incidental to surveying are going up. I am perfectly willing to listen to any reason, but the reason must be apparent on the things we have to consider.

The Minister for Lands: There are 11,000 reasons, that is all.

Mr. JAMES GARDINER: I want to find out how much of the £6,500 that is transferred to loan from these very Estimates is for recoups. Again, take the Agricultural votes. Incidentals, for postages, stationery, advertising, and so on, have gone up by £2,646. The rabbit-proof fence shows an increase of about £9,000. Wheat farms have gone up by £4,355.

The Minister for Lands: I have not yet dealt with the Agricultural Department.

Mr. JAMES GARDINER: We rather fell in over the same position the other night; but if we are going to discuss the Agricultural Department separately, let us discuss it separately. I can understand that the position of Ministers is a difficult one. However, if we are going to have economy, let us see that we get economy, and not some fanciful thing which is not economy. I realise, and I think every other man in the State realises, that land settlement is going to be less and less for two or three years in this State; that is, until the man on the land can see that he is going to get a living out of it, and that there is going to be some increment left to him afterwards. At the present juncture that does not obtain, except in favoured districts. It is no use shutting our eyes

to the fact that that is the position of Western Australia with regard to land settlement.

Mr. WILLMOTT (Nelson): [11.7]: The Lands Department ever since I have known it—which is about 30 years—has been considered the mother of all departments. All the other departments that have sprung up in Western Australia are the offspring of the Lands Department.

The Premier: Who told you that?

Mr. WILLMOTT: I know it of my own knowledge, from having lived here for the last 30 years. The Mines Department and every other department have sprung from the Lands Department, which was the original department in this State.

The Premier: Where did you hear that last?

Mr. WILLMOTT: I have not heard it at all. I am voicing what I know to be the fact.

Mr. Heitmann: But what is the point?

Mr. WILLMOTT: The point is that the dear old mother is a bit old-fashioned. I regret that it has been found necessary to put off 17 inspectors of the Lands Department. If there is no work for them to do, then of course they must go; but I very much doubt whether the work that has to be done can be done by the 16 inspectors who are left. The men who have been retrenched are, in many cases, men of long experience, which experience must be valuable to the State. Motor cars have been provided for the inspectors, and I acknowledge that the long distances which the light Ford cars travel are astonishing. Certainly, an enormously larger amount of work can be done with the cars than with the old horse and trap. Regarding the work of the inspectors, I am of opinion that many of the improvements which they enforce are absolutely unnecessary. In the more heavily timbered districts, a ring fence is quite useless. The money expended on this fencing would be very much better employed in the clearing of a little more land.

The Minister for Lands: The ring fence is not enforced now.

Ministry on more than anything else, it is the fact that they came along and built the railways which were authorised by the previous Government.

Hon. Frank Wilson: They were a long time building them.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: I complained about the delays and I would have liked to see them construct them as quickly as the hon. member built the Bullfinch railway, but neither the hon. member nor the present Government seemed able to achieve that desirable result.

Hon. Frank Wilson: I am the best railway builder in the country.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: The hon. member's records for railway construction have been beaten, but I will admit that the hon. member's record for authorising a lot of paper railways on the eve of a general election would be difficult to surpass. The awful struggle that many of the settlers in Western Australia have experienced has been brought about through delay in the construction of railways. The member for Irwin seems to be a little pessimistic about the future of land settlement, and about the position of the people on the land, and whilst I criticised the member for Northam in this connection, I do say that the whole hope of the Government and of everyone else lies on those people who, after having experienced three or four bad seasons, worse than the rainfall records of the State ever led us to believe would be possible—

Mr. Harrison: What are they going to make out of it after it is all done?

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: There is some hope of them making something out of their holdings after a good year like the present one, and that success will encourage them to continue the development of their land. Reverting to the breaking up of this professional staff, I cannot but express regret that a staff which has cost so much to organise is to be withdrawn; and I think the Minister will find in the near future that the absence of these inspectors will bring about serious delays in the dealings of the public with the department which

will only be overcome by the reappointment of the officers.

This concluded the general debate on the Lands Estimates.

Item, Extra clerical assistance, overtime, messengers, caretakers, cleaners, special allowances, temporary draftsmen, etc., £2,700.

Mr. ROBINSON: Will the Minister agree to report progress on this item?

[The Deputy Speaker resumed the Chair].

Progress reported.

BILLS (2)—RETURNED FROM THE COUNCIL.

1, Marriage Act Amendment.

2, Postponement of Debts Act Continuation.

Without amendment.

House adjourned at 11.21 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 12th October, 1915.

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The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Colonial Secretary: 1, Reports for year ended 30th June, 1915, of (a) Railways and Tramways, (b) State Children Department, (c) Trustees of Public Lib-